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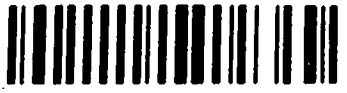
BIANCA VISCONTI E FRANCESCO SFORZA SUO SPOSO.

From a Fresco of Giulio Campi in the Church of S. Sigismondo near Cremona.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LIFE AND TIMES

OF

FRANCESCO SFORZA

DUKE OF MILAN

WITH A PRELIMINARY SKETCH OF THE
HISTORY OF ITALY

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BY

WM. POLLARD URQUHART, ESQ.

VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE *Life of Francesco Sforza*, written by his Secretary, SIMONETA, and published in the twenty-first volume of the *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, has afforded the principal materials for the greater part of this work. The Sketch of the Life of SFORZA ATTENDOLO, father of FRANCESCO SFORZA, given in the second and third chapters of the Second Book, is taken in the main from *Leodrisii Crebellii Vita Johannis Sfortiæ Vicecomitis*, contained in the nineteenth volume of the above-mentioned collection. I have not referred to either of these authorities, except in stating a speech or relating an anecdote which might appear to require confirmation.

I cannot let these Volumes go forth to the Public without mentioning the obligation I am under to my friends, Mr ADAM URQUHART, Sheriff of Wigtonshire, and Mr ALEXANDER FORBES IRVINE, Advocate, for their assistance in superintending their progress through the Press.

W. P. U.

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BOOK FIRST.

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF ITALY FROM THE SUBVERSION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE TILL THE BEGINNING OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

LIFE AND TIMES

OF

FRANCESCO SFORZA.

BOOK FIRST.

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF ITALY FROM THE SUBVERSION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE TILL THE BEGINNING OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

SUBJECT STATED.—RETROSPECT OF ITALIAN HISTORY.—INFLUENCE EXERCISED THEREON BY THE PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE COUNTRY.—ITALY OVERRUN BY THE GOTHS, HUNS, VANDALS, AND HERULI.—DEPOSITION OF THE LAST EMPERORS BY ODOACER, KING OF THE HERULI.—COMMENCEMENT OF THE FORMATION OF A NEW LANGUAGE AND PEOPLE.—ITALY SUBJECT TO THE OSTROGOTHS, GREEKS, AND LOMBARDS.—ORIGIN AND RISE OF THE PAPACY.—INVASION OF ITALY BY PEPIN, KING OF THE FRANKS.—ASSIGNMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF ROMAGNA TO THE POPE.—CHARLEMAGNE CONQUERS ALL THE LOMBARD PROVINCES—IS CROWNED BY THE POPE.—ITALY UNDER THE SUCCESSORS OF CHARLEMAGNE.—ITALIANS CHOOSE A KING OF THEIR OWN NATION TO DEFEND THEM AGAINST SARACENS AND HUNS.—OTHO THE GREAT CROWNED EMPEROR BY JOHN XII.—DEPOSES THE POPE, AND CHOOSES ONE IN HIS ROOM.—IMPERIAL RIGHT OF CHOOSING POPES MAINTAINED BY OTHO II. AND OTHO III. SUFFERED TO LAPSE INTO DISUSE—REVIVED BY HENRY III.—CHARACTER OF THE MONK HILDEBRAND—SUCCEEDS TO THE PAPACY UNDER THE TITLE OF GREGORY VII.—ORIGIN OF THE KINGDOM OF NAPLES.—DISPUTES BETWEEN GREGORY VII. AND HENRY IV.—POPE'S TREATMENT OF THE EMPEROR.—WAR OF INVESTITURES—CONTINUED BY HENRY V.—ITS TERMINATION.—CONSTITUTION AND ORIGIN OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLICS.—ORIGIN OF THE GUELF AND GHIBELLINE PARTY IN GERMANY.—FREDERIC BARBAROSSA.—MARRIAGE OF HIS SON WITH COSTANZA, HEIRESS OF THE KINGDOM OF THE SICILIES.—FREDERIC II.—HIS DEATH.

THE narration of the life of any eminent public man, the investigation of the circumstances which contributed

to his rise, and the exhibiting the individual qualities which enabled him to turn them to account, is generally supposed to afford a tolerably good exposition of the age in which he lived, and of the people among whom his lot was cast. Perhaps there never was a people whose history at any period may be better studied in this manner than the Italians of the middle ages, united as they were by the bond of superior civilisation, by identity of language, and affinity of geographical position, but divided into a number of small communities frequently at war among themselves, whose separate history it is often difficult to trace, and tedious to narrate. In the last century of their independence there flourished among them one individual who was intimately connected with their politics and intrigues, who alternately served, waged war against, and outwitted them all, and who rose from being captain of a band of mercenary soldiers to be the arbiter of the general politics of the peninsula, and sovereign of one of the most powerful of its states. That individual was Francesco Sforza, the son of a peasant of Romagna, the founder of the last dynasty of dukes who reigned at Milan. I purpose to illustrate the state of the Hesperian peninsula, and the genius of its inhabitants, at the above-mentioned period, by writing the life and times of this remarkable man.

To attain a right understanding of the scene on which he played his part, and of the contemporary characters with whom he was associated, it will be necessary to take a slight retrospect of the fortunes of his country, from the time she was ruled by the mistress of the

world, till he made his appearance in the great drama of her history.

The truth of a remark of a philosophical historian,* that the physical geography of a land exercises a powerful influence over the destinies of its inhabitants, is nowhere more fully illustrated than in the fortunes of Italy. The portion of the globe at present known by that name is included between the Alps, the Adriatic, and the Mediterranean. As its limits are thus clearly defined, and as it is protected by the sea, and by a rampart of mountains inferior in height to few on the surface of the earth, it might seem, at first sight, to be adapted by nature to be the seat of a powerful and united nation. But, unfortunately for the peace of the country, there issues from the southern extremity of the Alpine rampart another mountainous chain, which, running diagonally across the peninsula, extends to the very edge of the Adriatic, and which, though inferior in height and ruggedness to the former, presents obstacles sufficient to impede the free current of nationality. From this dorsal spine innumerable ridges branch out to the sea on either side, thus rendering the country a meet scene for internal discords and strifes. The great plain to the north-east of this chain is intersected in its whole length by a wide river, which receives from the mountains innumerable tributaries, most of which have at different times formed the boundary of a state, or been the scene of a battle. From time immemorial, the

* ARNOLD, *Lectures on Modern History.*

divisions of the inhabitants have been in accordance with those which nature had already made. They never continued united, except as subjects of the empire, which ruled over all the countries lying between the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Atlantic, on one side; the Rhine, the Danube, and the great desert of Zahara on the other. Even then it was not without difficulty that they amalgamated in the nationality of Rome. The Cisalpine Gaul of ancient times did not differ more from the colonist of the Lacedæmonian Tarentum, than did the Lombard of the middle ages from the descendant of the mixed race of Normans, Saracens, French, and Aragons, who in their turns have conquered and occupied the southern provinces. The contrast between the active and bustling Milanese of the present day and the indolent Calabrian, cannot fail to strike the eye of the most unobservant of travellers.

But whatever divisions may have been caused by the Apennines and the Po, with their ramifications and tributaries, there is one point of resemblance between all the provinces of the fair peninsula: they all possess the fatal gift of beauty.* This was the cause of many of their misfortunes. The fertility of the basin of the Po presented a glittering allurement to the barbarians who had not long emerged from the forests of Sarmatia. The mild and congenial climate to be enjoyed in the valleys of the Apennines, where even the summer heats

* "Italia, Italia, o tu cui feo la sorte
Dono infelice di bellezza ond hai
Funesta dote d' infiniti guai."
Filicaia Sonnetto.

may be avoided by a temporary retreat to the mountains, could not fail to attract those who had hitherto been exposed to the inclement climate north of the Danube and the Rhine. The coasts of Apulia and Calabria offered the fairest of prizes to the Norman and Saracen pirates. In later times, the richness and opulence of the cities whetted the ambition and excited the avarice of the semi-civilised monarchs of feudal Europe.

It will be "long to tell, and sad to trace" the successive invasions, misfortunes, and revolutions of the land, from the decline of the Western Empire to the period when the cities, in whose fame and prosperity she may be said to have lived again, sprang, like so many goddesses of beauty, from an ocean of troubles. The universality of the fatal gift which has been already alluded to, made all its provinces alike suffer for the crimes, and expiate the guilt, of their imperial mistress. The Visigoths were the first of the barbarians to whom it was permitted by Providence to glut their ire on the spot where so many of their sires had expired in the brutal combats of the gladiators. After three sieges, the city, which had once been mistress of the world, was taken and plundered by the hordes of this great and terrible nation from the north. So great was the impression made by this event, that the name of their leader, Alaric, was for some time afterwards a by-word of terror. Forty-two years later, the land was overrun by a fresh set of barbarians, who were led on by a man who had assumed for himself and his followers the title of "Scourge of God," and had carried fire and pillage

from the walls of China to the western Alps. Rome was, however, spared by these savages; but their invasion is remarkable for their having driven a number of people to take refuge on the sand-banks of the Adriatic, where they laid the foundations of the republic of Venice. Three years after their retreat, the imperial city was doomed to be taken a second time, and to undergo a pillage still more terrible than the former, by Genseric, king of the Vandals, who, in the words of the historian of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, "carried off whatever he could find of sacred or profane wealth—of public or of private treasure." The last emperors who reigned in the city of the Cæsars, one of whom by a strange fatality was called Romulus Momyllus Augustulus, thus bearing the names of the first of the kings, and the first of the acknowledged emperors, were conquered at Pavia by Odoacer, king of the Heruli, who deposed Romulus after his colleague had been slain in battle, and made himself king of Rome. Not long afterwards the ex-emperor was treacherously murdered by his uncivilised conqueror.

Though before the invasion of the Heruli Italy had been thrice overrun by nations totally differing in race and character from its old inhabitants, and though the seat of government had been twice taken, none of the conquerors had ventured to settle in the country, or to arrogate to themselves its sovereignty. The land, though it had been devastated and plundered by its savage conquerors, still remained subject to its old mistress. Its inhabitants, up to this period, corrupted and

degenerated though they might have been, were the descendants of those who had triumphed under the Scipios, and devoted themselves to literature and the arts in the reign of Augustus. But we cannot, after the invasion of the Heruli, expect to find the same government, the same nation, or the same inhabitants, in the Hesperian peninsula, as in the days of her departed greatness. It is at this period, the 470th year of the Christian era, that the history of ancient Rome may properly be said to terminate, and that of modern Italy to begin. The depopulation and destruction of property had been so great, as to have considerably facilitated the formation of a new nation. Machiavelli, in his *History of Florence*, says, that if ever there was a period in the history of any country full of misfortune and woe to the inhabitants, it was that which in Italy intervened from the times of Arcadius and Honorius to the death of Odoacer. This opinion is fully borne out by two passages from contemporary writers, quoted by Gibbon in his history of this period, which will enable us in some measure to judge of the deplorable state to which Italy, hitherto tenanted principally by its ancient masters, was at this time reduced. St Ambrose deplored the ruin of the populous district that had once been covered with such cities as Modena, Bologna, Reggio, and Piacenza. Pope Gelasius talks of Æmilia, Tuscany, and the contiguous provinces, as being left almost void of inhabitants. Although it is probable that these passages are not free from some tinge of exaggeration, they will nevertheless convey to us some

notion of the diminished elements of Roman nationality, that were mingled in the fusion of the several races from which the modern Italians have sprung. They will show, too, how the manners, language, character, and other traits which mark the individuality of a people, must have been modified by the successive hoards of barbarians by whom the land still continued to be invaded.

The reign of Odoacer was short and inglorious. In his turn he was defeated, and afterwards slain by Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, a prince whose name, as Gibbon says, still attracts and deserves the attention of mankind. In his time the land had repose from the troubles by which, for the space of nearly one century, she had been oppressed; and it seemed as if a new nation, sprung from the heterogeneous elements of the former and present possessors of Italy, was already about to live and to prosper. Theodoric, excelling alike in the arts of peace and war, was always victorious in the latter; and, from his attention to the former, he conferred incalculable benefits on his subjects. To prevent further disputes about the possession of the land, he assigned one-third of it to his own countrymen, and appointed them to all the military posts; while he endeavoured to encourage industrial occupations among the ancient inhabitants. But, with this single exception, as much favour was shown to the latter as to the former. Though, after the example of Valentinian, he established his principal residence at Ravenna, he had another palace at Verona, where he took up his quarters whenever his presence was necessary to protect the

frontiers of his kingdom from a threatened invasion of barbarians. Security from without, and tranquillity and justice within, produced their natural consequences. Though many of the most renowned cities of the empire, which had been ruined during the convulsions of the preceding period, never rose again from their ashes, the origin or the recovery of others may be traced to this epoch, which became so famous in the mediæval history of Italy. Among these may be mentioned Venice, Ferrara, Aquila, Chiusi, and Sienna, towns which, both for their ancient renown and the beautiful monuments of the arts to be found in them, attract the attention of every modern traveller. Florence, Genoa, Pisa, and Milan, hitherto places of minor importance, began to increase in wealth and population; and on the site of the small watering-place of Parthenope there began to arise a new city, which became the second in the continent of Europe. Gibbon says that all these cities acquired, in the reign of Theodoric, the useful and splendid decorations of baths, churches, porticoes, and palaces. Though the metropolis of the ancient world was no longer the seat of government, the injuries done to her in three successive captures were repaired, and some attempt was made to restore her to her former splendour. It was about this time that, according to Machiavelli, new names began to be given to places as well as to men; and the elements of the language of Dante and Boccaccio began to displace that of Virgil and Cicero.

This brief interlude to the troubles of Italy ter-

minated at the death of the great Gothic monarch. The kingdom then devolved upon Alaric, the son of Amalasciunta, the daughter of Theodoric, who did not long survive his illustrious grandfather. Shortly after his death, Amalasciunta was treacherously murdered by her chief minister, Teodotus, who was unable to resist the temptation afforded to him of supplanting a woman in her rights over the newly-erected kingdom. The ill-founded claims of Teodotus, and his unpopularity with his own subjects, presented to the emperor Justinian an opportunity, which he did not neglect, of recovering the provinces of the Western Empire. While he himself was devoted to theological studies, or occupied in framing the system of laws which has rendered his name famous among posterity, he sent the renowned Belisarius to Italy. The Goths, terrified at the approach of a general who had hitherto seemed the special favourite of Heaven, and disgusted at the incapacity of Teodotus, killed him, and elected one of their own countrymen, Vitiges, king in his room. The new king was conquered and captured by his great opponent, but managed, after his recall, to regain his ground. Belisarius was sent to Italy a second time, and the Goths, after having plundered Rome while he was at Ostia, fled at his approach ; but the factious violence of parties at Constantinople compelled the emperor to recall him before he had time to do more than endeavour to repair the damages done to the ancient city in her last capture. The command of the armies of Justinian then devolved upon Narses, whose successes were

equal to those of his great predecessor. But, as before, the jealousies and intrigues of the Eastern court were too great to allow the successor of Justinian to reap any permanent advantage from the victories of his general. After Narses had defeated and slain Totila, and his successor Teia, and had brought the kingdom of Theodoric, which had lasted for seventy years, under the dominion of its ancient masters, he saw the reward so justly due to his services conferred upon another. The Emperor Justin, at the instigation of his wife Sophia, recalled Narses, and made Longinus governor, or, as it was thenceforward termed, ex-arch of Italy, in his room.

The policy of the new ex-arch, as it had no small influence over the subsequent fortunes of the peninsula, deserves to be noticed. Abrogating all vestiges of the system of centralisation, he appointed in every town or territory of importance a governor under the title of Duke. In this arrangement no favourable distinction was shown to Rome. The former mistress of the world now beheld the total abrogation of those offices that had been an object of ambition to Tully and to Cæsar, and by which the most powerful of the subsequent emperors had deemed their dignity increased.

The spirit of Narses, already roused by beholding the honours to which he thought himself entitled conferred upon another, was unable to brook the taunts with which the Empress Sophia answered his remonstrances. A fresh set of barbarians, known at that time by the name

of Longobardi, or long-beards, and by that of Lombardi in more modern history, who had already established themselves in the cradle of the conquerors of Italy, the upper bank of the Danube, afforded ready ministers of vengeance to the injured and indignant general. The want of union in the country which Longinus had divided into duchies, caused it to be an easy conquest to this fresh horde of invaders. Under their king, Alboin, they made themselves masters of all the northern parts of the peninsula, including the provinces of Romagna or Flaminia, and Tuscany. After the murder of Alboin, and a series of intrigues, the events of which would furnish meet subject for the art of a tragic poet, and which seemed to foreshadow the unhappy celebrity of the Italians of the middle ages for the frequent use of the dagger and the bowl,* the sovereignty of the Lombards devolved upon Clefi, who united to the talents of a conqueror the ferocity of a savage. On the death of Clefi, his subjects, disgusted with his severity, and mistrusting the form of government which had given scope for the exercise of such tyranny, changed their constitution and divided the conquered country into thirty duchies, thus continuing the disunion begun by Longinus in a land which seemed designed by nature to prove the truth of the saying of the wise man, "For the transgression of a country are its rulers multiplied." Either because this constitution was as ill adapted for conquest as it had been for defence, or because the physical nature of the south of Italy presented impediments to their further

* Machiavelli, *Ist.* lib. i.

progress, the Lombards never extended their dominions south of Benevento. Thus were left unoccupied those provinces which in subsequent times formed the basis of the kingdom of Naples. Several of the towns in the country north of Benevento, among which were Naples, Rome, Ravenna, Mantua, Pasina, Cremona, Monselice, Facuya, Padua, and Forli, were only partially occupied by the new conquerors. So soon as they had ceased to fear being disturbed in their new possessions by the Greeks, the duchies of Italy showed the same disposition to quarrel among themselves that the republics of the middle ages did when they were freed from the power of the emperor. For about 230 years Italy continued in this state, divided between the Greeks and the Lombards, and a new power which had sprung up at Rome, of which it is necessary to give some account.

Towards the end of the second century various circumstances had contributed to give to the bishops of the Christian church a degree of power which does not appear to have been enjoyed by their predecessors. The great increase in their numbers, and the custom of holding councils or synods, rendered it necessary that those of each province should delegate some authority to one of themselves, who was denominated their Metropolitan; and the metropolitans in like manner showed the same deference to another chief to whom was given the title of Patriarch. It is easy to see that, with the spread of the Christian religion, a great deal of legitimate and proper influence must naturally have accrued to this

new order of ecclesiastics, and a great deal more than was either legitimate or proper might be attained by any one who was sufficiently ambitious or artful to turn his position to account. From the earliest ages a variety of circumstances concurred in causing much deference to be shown to the patriarch of Rome. The absence of any metropolitans in the adjoining country, of course increased his local power. The very fact of his being resident at the imperial city, and being the spiritual head of an assembly of men, many of whom, as their religion began to gain ground, took no mean share in managing the affairs of the civilised world, rendered his position one of eminence throughout Christendom. After the removal of the seat of government to Constantinople, these latter causes were not without their effect on the patriarchs of that city, and they in consequence never deferred to the authority of those at Rome; but the long duration of the Eastern Empire caused the presence of the emperors to act as a salutary check upon the pretensions of the former, after the destruction of the Western Empire had given freer scope to those of the latter.

The barbarians who overran the West showed no wish to interfere in the affairs of the church, or with the authority of its officers. Most of them, indeed, thought it desirable to conciliate the clergy, who possessed so much influence among those whom they wished to become their subjects; and the most enlightened among them, as Theodoric, looked upon the ministers of the Christian religion as the means of diffusing civilisation

among their untaught followers. The establishment of the court at Ravenna left the local authority of the Roman patriarchs more unbridled than before; and this authority was further increased by the subsequent abrogation of all the offices of the old Roman republic. Besides which, the tradition that Rome had first been erected into a bishopric by St Peter, caused no small degree of deference to be shown to one who might claim to be considered his representative.

The long unsettled state of the West was, of course, favourable to the growth of the only power that had withstood the devastating tides of the barbaric invasions. At the end of the fifth, and the beginning of the sixth century, the pontifical authority was considerably strengthened by the talents of Gregory, bishop of Rome, surnamed the Great, in whose hands, as Mr Hallam justly observes, claims half disputed, or imperfectly asserted, assumed a more definite form. It is, however, difficult to ascertain over what extent of territory he claimed ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and in the opinion of some, though he inveighed against the title, he seemed desirous to exercise the functions, of universal bishop.

In the period that followed the invasion of the Lombards, the holy chair was frequently filled by men sufficiently artful to profit by the contentions between them and the Greeks. These pontiffs lost no opportunity of receiving an acknowledgment of their claims, from whichever of the contending powers they deemed it advisable for the time to befriend; and they fre-

quently did not scruple to make use of the authority that had thus accrued to them against the very party who had hoped to profit by their alliance. In the beginning of the seventh century, the Greek emperor Phocas acknowledged the claims of the bishop of Rome to the title of œcumenical or universal; though this act seems in no way to have affected the independence of the subsequent patriarchs of the East. To the insidious policy of the Roman pontiffs, which continued through succeeding ages, Machiavelli ascribes the perpetuating of the discords of Italy, which, commencing in the times of the Lombards, gave such continual opportunities to foreigners to interfere in its politics, and, after the fifteenth century, caused its final degradation in the scale of nations. And this it was that, in the eighth century, gave an opportunity to the Franks, whose monarchy was established in the province of ancient Gaul, and had just begun to acquire a considerable degree of stability and power, to interfere in the affairs of the peninsula.

In the year 751, Aistolfus, king of the Lombards, having taken possession of Ravenna, and openly declared war against Pope Stephen II., the latter, to whom the power of the Greeks seemed now like a broken reed, fled to France, and openly besought the aid of King Pepin II. As a proof of the sanctity with which even then the person of the pontiff was regarded, it may be mentioned that, when he was on his journey for that purpose, he was allowed to pass unmolested through the territories of his enemies. The assistance sought for on the occasion was readily given by one

who probably might have already been desirous of an excuse to carry his arms south of the Alps, and might have been so far imbued by the superstitions of the age as to have hailed the alliance of the pontiff as the means of securing the co-operation of Him whose vicegerent he pretended to be. The result of the expedition was certainly such as might have justified the most sanguine expectations. Aistolfus was forced to submit, and owed his life entirely to the intercession of the pope, who* did not wish that his enemy should perish, but had rather that he should be converted and live. The king, though humbled for the time, forgot his vows of submission on the return of Pepin to France. The pope was therefore again obliged to invoke the assistance of Pepin; and on the second coming of that monarch, Aistolfus had the mortification of beholding Ravenna, where the Greek ex-arch had still continued to reside, and all the territory that was attached to that duchy, together with that of Urbino, and the March of Ancona—in short, all those provinces which, together with the duchy of Rome, have continued to form the States of the Church—assigned to his rival. And in order to invest the new dominions of the pope with whatever degree of dignity might still be attached to the name of the city of the Cæsars, and to make this accession of territory appear like an ancient appendage, the appellation of Romagna was given to the newly acquired territories. The inclusion of the duchy of Ravenna in these territories must have been peculiarly gratifying to

* MACHIAVELLI, *Ist.* lib. i.

the bishops of Rome, as those of the former place, which for nearly four centuries had been the principal seat of government in Italy, had asserted their independence of the universal dominion claimed by the so-called successors of St Peter.

In the sovereignty over the Lombards, Aistolfus was succeeded by Desiderius, duke of Tuscany, who, little expecting to find the talents of Pepin in his son Charles, made a rash attempt to expel the Roman pontiff from his newly-acquired dominions. This deed of aggression, or sacrilege, caused the pope again to appeal to the monarch of the Franks, and subjected the unfortunate Desiderius to the vengeance of the most powerful king and the most fortunate conqueror of the age. In the year 774, the great Charles crossed the Alps with an army, overcame Desiderius at the same place where Aistolfus had been made a prisoner, and made himself king of the Lombards. Six years afterwards, his son Pepin was crowned king of Italy; and twenty years later, when Charles had conquered a considerable portion of the old Western Empire, together with the provinces beyond the Rhine and the Danube, as far as the Baltic, Pope Leo III., willing to show him a favour, and to mortify the Greek empress, conferred on him the dignity of the representative of the Cæsars. In return for these favours, the newly-crowned emperor confirmed the Holy See in the possession of the territories that had been assigned to it by his predecessor, and added some others. Thus did the first and the most talented of the new emperors establish and augment that power which,

in the eleventh and twelfth century, was so bitterly hostile to his successors, and which ended by depriving them of all authority over the fairest, most wealthy, and most flourishing part of their dominions.

This alliance between the spiritual and temporal heads of the western world continued as long as it suited the policy of each to maintain it. There were, however, many unsettled claims between them, which might at any time become fruitful sources of discord. As the empire extended as far as Benevento, the States of the Church were, of course, included therein; so that the degree of sovereignty which the popes were entitled to exercise in their own dominions was open to dispute. The emperors might also claim a right of interfering in the pontifical elections, to which it is probable that an ambitious hierarchy might be ill inclined to submit; for in the earlier ages of Christianity, as soon as the authority of the bishops of Rome began to be felt in the municipal regulations of the city, their elections were occasionally attended with such sedition and tumult as to call for the interference of the imperial troops. The emperors of Rome and of Constantinople occasionally tried to control the people and the clergy in their choice at these elections, according as they wished for the promotion of a favourite, or took part in the controversies of the day; but in the troubles of the empire they never opposed the united wishes of the great body of the church. Theodoric reserved for himself the right of passing a veto, but this was suffered to fall into disuse in the distracted state of Italy that fol-

lowed his death. Charlemagne always insisted that his consent should be obtained before the consecration of any pontiff; and the clergy of his time were unwilling to dispute anything with the most powerful of monarchs and the most faithful of their friends. This right, however, was not insisted on by the feeble successors of the great emperor; and in course of time the selection of a pontiff devolved principally upon the cardinals, a new order of ecclesiastics, who were taken principally from the provincial bishops of the territory of Rome. On the other hand, as Charlemagne himself had been consecrated by Pope Leo III., and in some degree founded his own authority on the pontiff's right of selection, the successors of Leo might avail themselves of this precedent to assert their right of interfering in the election of the emperors.

It was, however, some time before these unsettled claims produced any disputes. Though the successors of Charlemagne were incapable of enforcing their rights in a distant province, and were trampled on by the French clergy, the bishops of Rome did not show them any disrespect. Thus, for the greater part of the ninth and tenth centuries, history makes little mention of Italian affairs, except when the debaucheries of the popes, or the intrigues connected with their elections, afforded matter of scandal against the church. The northern part of Italy, which had been subjugated by the Lombards, appears to have enjoyed a considerable degree of tranquillity and prosperity; while the south, which remained nominally subject to the

Greeks, suffered considerably from the incursions of pirates.

Though the kingdom of Italy had been conquered by Charlemagne, the Lombards, who had completely amalgamated with its former inhabitants, were left in the undisturbed enjoyment of their properties and titles. The country, as has already been stated, had originally been divided into thirty duchies; but this number was considerably diminished by the consolidation of the smaller ones, and, after the expulsion of Charles the Fat, does not appear to have exceeded five or six. Besides these, there had arisen, in the time of Charlemagne, a new order of nobles under the title of Counts, who were generally intrusted with the government of cities. Even under the monarchy of the Lombards, the authority of the kings over the great nobles and cities had never been very great, and under the enfeebled successors of Charlemagne it became little more than nominal. But at the end of the ninth century, Italy was invaded by the Hungarians, the last of the barbaric hordes from Pannonia by whom Europe was overrun; and its inhabitants, finding the necessity of a leader to defend them against these savages, chose Berengarius, duke of Truili, as their king. Though his authority was at different times disputed by Alberic, duke of Tuscany, and Arnolph, king of the Burgundians, he managed to transmit the crown to his son, Berengarius II. The latter was so pressed by rivals that he was obliged to implore the assistance of Otho, king of Germany; and after he had thus

secured himself, he became so unpopular among the chief nobles of his realm that they in their turn appealed to the German monarch. Otho, having again passed the Alps in the year 953, made Berengarius his vassal, and was himself crowned king of Italy at Milan. This last event is not a little remarkable, as being the first occasion on which a German monarch received the iron crown which afterwards became so famous in history. Ten years afterwards, the same Otho was consecrated emperor by Pope John XII.; and though he was considerably beholden to the good offices of the pontiff, he did not hesitate to depose him, and, much against the will of the Roman populace, to erect a friend of his own in his place. On the deposition of the pontiff, there was read a catalogue of the crimes and vices laid to his charge;* and though, for the sake of human nature, it may be hoped that most of them were untrue or exaggerated, yet, as they do not appear to have been thought incredible at the time, they afford melancholy proof of the public opinion concerning pontifical morality.

The right of interfering in the election of the pontiffs, which had been revived by Otho, was exercised by his successors. The people frequently named a pope of their own, in opposition to the emperor, but were always obliged to give way. At no period, says M. Sismondi, is the history of the popes more stained with crimes than during the reign of Otho and his two successors; but, happily for the memory of the former,

* For this charge, see M. Sismondi, *Republiques Italiennes*, chap. iii.

the chronicles which relate these crimes are too concise and obscure for the scandalous history to strike the imagination, or to imprint its details on the memory.

The successors of Otho III.—Henry II. and Conrad —were too much engaged in other matters to take much part in the affairs of the popes. The former had a little difficulty in maintaining his power against Ardoin, marquis of Ivrea; and the latter, after some altercations with the great feudatory lords of Italy, who were evidently anxious to shake off the yoke of their German sovereigns, settled the laws of feudal succession at a diet held at Roncaglia in the year 1026. Passing thence to Rome, he was crowned emperor, and was afterwards too much occupied with Transalpine business to attend to the affairs of Italy. In 1039 he was succeeded by his son Henry III., who, however, was not able to visit Italy till seven years after his accession. Finding three rival popes on his arrival at Rome, he deposed them all, and chose in their place a German, under the title of Clement II. This right of nominating the pontiffs, which had been enforced by the Othos, but had been allowed to fall into disuse by their successors, was continued by Henry till the end of his reign, but seems never to have been abused.

Henry III., dying in the year 1056, was succeeded in his kingdom, and afterwards in the empire, by his son Henry IV. That prince, being still a child, was left at Rome under the tutelage of Victor II., a pope of the late emperor's choice. But the death of Victor,

which soon followed that of the emperor, and the minority of Henry, gave the people and clergy an opportunity of reasserting their independence, of which they did not fail to avail themselves. Nor were they without an adequate leader for the occasion. Among the clergy a considerable degree of influence had lately been acquired by a monk of the name of Hildebrand, a man who, in the words of M. Sismondi, united in himself all the energy of will which usually belongs to immoderate ambition, and all the hardness of a man who, having passed his life in a cloister, was a stranger to the feelings of humanity. Determined at once to maintain what he deemed to be the rights of the church, and to put an end to the scandalous abuses which appeared to justify the interference of the emperors, he often confounded the projects of his ambition with his duties as a reformer; and he seems not unfrequently to have persuaded himself, as he certainly tried to make others believe, that the two were identical. During the reign of the three popes who, for the ten years following the death of Victor, filled the pontifical chair, he was the chief director of the ecclesiastical policy, after which his own elevation to that seat gave him more ample opportunities of carrying his projects into execution. But, in the mean time, a new power had arisen in the south of Italy, of which, as it took some part in the contests between the popes and the emperors, it is desirable to trace the origin.

As the Lombards had never extended their conquests beyond Benevento, the southern provinces of the king-

dom, which had been conquered by Belisarius and by Narses, continued to remain under the dominion of the successors of Justinian. But the Greek empire, though it maintained its existence against the hordes who, issuing from the German forests and the Sarmatian and Scythian steppes, had occupied the provinces and completely subverted the government of Rome, was in its turn minished and brought low by a fresh horde of invaders, who fell upon it with the rapacity of savages and the fury of fanatics. The Saracens, who date their rise from the reign of the founder of their religion, the celebrated Mohammed, had been constantly encroaching upon its southern and eastern frontiers, and had taken the provinces of Egypt, Syria, and Libya. Being thus completely masters of the Levant, and established along the southern shores of the Mediterranean, they betook themselves to piracy, and became as formidable on the sea as they had been redoubtable on land. The island of Sicily, so admirably adapted to be an entrepot of marine robbers, could not fail to attract the notice and whet the cupidity of these adventurers of the Tyrrhenian sea. Accordingly, in the tenth century, we find them established in several places in that island, as also in the coasts of Apulia and Calabria, whence they became the scourge and the terror of those who lived near the shores of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. The Greeks, unable to do anything of themselves, were glad to avail themselves of the aid of a Christian adventurer against their Infidel enemies: A band of the Northern freebooters, who had established

a kingdom called after themselves in the province of Neustria in Gaul, and, after the example of the Franks, had embraced the Christian religion, extended their incursions to the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, and occupied some of the fortresses of Romagna and Apulia. To William Guiscard, the chief of these Normans, the Greeks cried in their distress. A nation of pirates and robbers, who seldom hesitated to attack the possessions of their less warlike neighbours, were too glad to avail themselves of an excuse to wrest some of the most glittering preys from their fraternity of the sea. Accordingly, William, being tempted by the promises of the Greek legate Melorco, attacked the Saracens in Sicily, and, with the assistance of the prince of Capua and Salerno, expelled them from the island. Disappointed, by the treachery of Melorco, of the reward which he had expected in the scene of his victories, he made himself master of a considerable portion of the provinces of Apulia and Calabria, which still remained to the Greeks. To these provinces he was fortunate enough to obtain a title, in consequence of an ineffectual attempt made against him by Pope Leo IX., in the year 1053, who, after having been defeated and taken prisoner, was glad to purchase his liberty by sanctifying the usurpations of his captors. William was succeeded by his brother Robert, who conquered nearly all that still remained to the Greeks in the south of Italy. The popes confirmed the title of the Norman dukes to their conquests whenever they wanted the assistance of their new neighbours in their contests with the emperors. In the early part

of the following century, Sicily was wrested from the Saracens by Roger, one of Robert's descendants, who afterwards succeeded to the provinces of the south of Italy. Having obtained the title of king from the occupier of the Holy See, he completed his conquests by the subjugation of the independent republics of Amalfi and Naples.

During the minority of Henry IV., no attempt was made to check the rising power and independence of the church. But the arrival of that monarch at years of discretion, and the subsequent succession of Hildebrand himself to the see whose councils he had so long directed, brought matters to a crisis between the two potentates, each of whom might claim a prescriptive right to elect and to depose the other. The immediate cause of their collision was a dispute concerning the question of investitures, which arose in the following manner.

According to the feudal laws of Europe, none were considered the lawful possessors of the lands and tenements which they held from the emperors and the princes, until they had sworn allegiance to them as supreme proprietors, and received a solemn mark by which the property of their respective grants was transferred. No exception was made in favour of bishops or abbots, who were confirmed in their possessions with the same forms and ceremonies that were used in the investiture of others in their feudal tenements. This practically conferred the power of choosing the bishops and abbots upon the sovereigns, who, too often it is to be feared, bestowed the vacant benefice upon the highest bidder.

The right of electing the chief dignitaries of the church had originally belonged to the people, but had subsequently lapsed to the clergy. The latter, solicitous to maintain the privileges of their order, tried to prevent the recurrence of these usurpations on the part of the princes, by consecrating the person whom they had selected to fill the post of any vacant bishopric or abbey. As the ceremony of consecration was deemed irrevocable, the sovereign was obliged to put the person whom the clergy had thus chosen in possession of the lands and dignities attached to his office. To defeat this stratagem on the part of the clergy, the emperors and princes ordered that, on the decease of any bishop or abbot, his ring and crozier, which were requisite for the consecration of his successor, should be sent to them. This decree was generally put into execution by the local magistracy and governors of provinces, to whom the illness and decease of the great ecclesiastics were generally known. Thus the temporary sovereigns of Christendom managed to retain the most valuable of the patronage of the church. This encroachment of the emperors, which was often turned to the worst purposes of simony, could not fail to excite the indignation and encounter the opposition of the most zealous of reformers and the most ambitious of pontiffs; and he accordingly sent ambassadors to remonstrate on the subject with Henry IV. The ambassadors were graciously received by that monarch, but were not allowed to hold any council in his dominions, or to proceed judicially against those who had been guilty of the practice of simony. The pontiff,

undaunted by the opposition of the successor of Charlemagne and Otho, astonished the princes of Christendom by excommunicating sundry bishops and abbots, who, being in high favour with the emperor, were thought to have a considerable share in the distribution of his patronage, and by openly propounding an anathema both against those who received the investiture of a bishopric or abbey from a layman, and also against those by whom such investiture might be performed. After the promulgation of this anathema and the decrees of excommunication, Gregory summoned the emperor to Italy to give an account of himself. Henry was not deficient in either spirit or resolution, and in his turn deposed Gregory from the pontificate, and issued orders for the election of another pontiff; but being harassed by a powerful party in Germany, whose alliance was courted, and whose opposition to the emperor was fomented by the pope, he at length deemed it expedient to succumb to his spiritual adversary. On February, 1077, he crossed the Alps to obey the summons of the pontiff. His arrival at the fortress of Canisi in Tuscany, where the pontiff then resided, was the occasion of a memorable scene, recorded by all the annalists of the time, and remarkable as a proof of the degree of insolence which the pontiff had attained, and of the humiliation to which one of his most spirited adversaries, under the vain hope of purchasing his friendship, consented to submit. For three days and three nights of the month of February, in the year 1077, did the emperor of Germany and Italy remain barefooted and clad in sack-

cloth at the entrance of the fortress, awaiting the pleasure of the bishop of Rome to admit him to his presence. On the fourth day, the temporal head of the society of believers in the religion which orders its disciples to turn their left cheek to those that smite them on the right, consented to receive his suppliant rival. After much difficulty he granted him the absolution he demanded, but forbade him, till his further consent, to wear the insignia, or to exercise the functions of his imperial office. On his return to Germany, Henry, finding that he had failed by his concessions to heap coals of fire on the heads of his adversaries, again deposed Gregory, and defeated and slew Rodolph of Suabia, who had been elected emperor during his absence. He afterwards marched into Italy at the head of a powerful army, and after a protracted struggle, in which he was three times obliged to raise the siege of Rome, he made himself master of that city, chose a pope of his own, from whom he received the imperial crown, and besieged his mortal enemy, Gregory, in the castle of St Angelo. Before he could make himself master of the fortress, he was driven therefrom by Robert Guiscard, who, glad to purchase the pope's patronage by his protection, conducted him to Salerno, where he ended his days in the year 1085.

The war was continued by Henry, who might possibly have succeeded, if the clergy had not persuaded his sons to desert him. In the year 1091, his son Conrad revolted against him, and declared himself king of Italy. The emperor still maintained his ground, till the year 1106, when his son Henry, at the instigation

of the same counsellors, seized his father, and obliged him to abdicate the empire—an act which he could never have accomplished if it had not been for the influence of the clergy over the minds of the people, and the fear of the latter, lest haply, in siding with an excommunicated monarch, they should be found to fight against God. The grief occasioned by the defection of his son soon brought to the grave the broken-hearted emperor, who is said, during his last years, to have been occasionally in want of the necessaries of life.

The clergy soon found that in the change of emperors they had merely got a change of adversaries. Henry V., when secured by the death of his father in the imperial sceptre, vigorously maintained what he conceived to be the imperial rights. This war of investitures, as it is generally called, continued with various success, and some short cessation, till the election of Guy, archbishop of Vienna and count of Burgundy, to the pontifical chair, under the name of Callistus II. The great abilities, aided by the conciliatory qualities of this pontiff, enabled him to put an end to the contentions, of which all parties were now sufficiently weary. After much negotiation, a treaty was concluded at Worms in the year 1122, in which both disputants receded considerably from their original pretensions. But though this compromise was far from securing to the church all that had been demanded by the ambitious Hildebrand, yet the perseverance of the popes in the contest by which it was brought about made their position a very different one from what it had been in the reign of Henry III.

After the termination of this war, we find all Italy, with the exception of the new kingdom of Naples, divided into a number of independent republics, of which, however, it is no easy task to discover the origin, and to trace the growth. The division of the country by the Lombards into so many duchies prevented that centralisation which prevailed to a certain extent in other parts of Europe. As under the successors of Charlemagne the great nobles had begun to be virtually independent of the emperors, so, in the course of time, the people began to shake off the domination of the lords. In addition to this, the local power of the clergy, who in Italy were more independent of the popes than elsewhere, and the part which the populace had occasionally taken in the elections of the bishops, tended to give them some notions of municipal government. The invasions of the Huns and Saracens, which occurred during the tenth century, harassing as they were to the inhabitants of the country, were peculiarly auspicious to the independence of the cities. The weakness of the emperors, and the inability of the kings to defend the people, taught them to trust to their own right hands for the protection of their persons and their properties. The consequence was, that they flocked into cities; the cities were fortified; each citizen acquired some skill in the use of weapons; and in every community were to be found men who had some knowledge of the arts of war. In the course of time there came to be established in most of them a regular republican government, of which, though its

minor details varied in different cities, the following is a general outline: — The chief management of the executive seems to have been intrusted to two magistrates, who, as in the ancient republic of Rome, were chosen every year, and denominated Consuls. In some places, the ministers of war, justice, and finance were appointed in the same manner. There was a council, consisting of one hundred citizens, chosen indiscriminately from all classes, who referred the matters debated on among themselves to the general assembly of the people. From this council were chosen a select few, whose business it was to deliberate on those affairs that might require secresy and despatch, and to perform some of the duties of the executive. These last were known by the name of *Concilii di Credenza*, and their functions seem in some degree to have resembled those of cabinet ministers in Great Britain.

This constitution is said by the historian of the Italian republics to have been granted to the cities by Otho the Great. The annalist of Italy, however, maintains that though, after the death of Otho II. in 983, various attempts were made by the cities to form themselves into republics, there is no record of the establishment of any regular constitution till the year 1107, in which year he says that, all Lombardy being disordered by the wars of the Henrys, the inhabitants of Milan were fully determined to establish their liberty. Whatever may have been the date of their origin, it is certain that these last-named contests were peculiarly favourable to their growth. Those cities that sided

with the clergy naturally declared themselves independent of the emperor, and the emperors conceded their liberty to the others as the reward of their allegiance.*

It will readily be believed that the territorial nobles could not view with indifference the rising independence of the cities, and the flocking of the people within their walls; and accordingly, at the time of the first dawn of Italian liberty, we read of several wars between the citizens and the lords of the neighbouring country. But after a time both parties thought it better to come to terms. The people admitted the nobles to all the rights of citizenship, and occasionally appointed them to the first offices of the republic; and the nobles allowed the citizens free commerce with the cultivators of the soil, and abstained from offering any annoyance to the merchants when passing near their castles. So general had this custom become, that in the twelfth century it is said that the Marquis of Montferrat was the only nobleman who had not been admitted to the citizenship of some republic. It is not improbable that these citizen-noblemen and their descendants may have affected to look down upon the inhabitants of plebeian origin, and that their establishment within the city may have led to the formation of two distinct classes, and afforded materials for those party animosities which, for three centuries, continued in every state in Italy.

These new republics, though devoted to industrial arts, and increasing in wealth, were by no means free from mutual jealousies and contests among themselves.

* See *Muratori Antic. Ital.*—Dis. 45.

Though these contests did not produce any lasting result in Italy, they are nevertheless worth referring to, as showing the degree of spirit and independence of the free cities. The constant rivalry between Pavia, the ancient capital of Lombardy, and Milan, the most flourishing of the independent cities; the wars between Lodi and Milan; the contentions between Crema and Cremona, the former of which sought the protection, and remained the firm ally, of Milan,—are among the most interesting episodes of their history. The struggle maintained for ten years by Como against Milan, the heroic resistance and final submission of the latter, form the subject of a most interesting chapter in the work of M. Sismondi.

When the Emperor Henry V. died without children, in 1125, the electors were divided between the claims of two great German families, whose names soon became a byword of faction in their own country, whence it spread into Italy. The one of these were the Guelfs, the progenitors of the present royal family in Great Britain, and of the house of Este in Italy, several of whom had, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, been dukes of Bavaria and Saxony. The others were called Ghibellines, a name which they derived from a village in Franconia. The latter, after four of their descendants in succession had attained the imperial dignity, began to look upon the crown of the Cæsars as hereditary in their family. But the absence of their chief in the Holy Land, at the time that the last emperor had died without direct heirs, gave their rivals an opportu-

nity of reviving their claims, and they proclaimed Lothaire, duke of Saxony, who indeed was the legitimate heir of Henry V., emperor. It was not long, however, before Conrad, duke of Franconia, head of the opposite party, returned from the Holy Land, and was acknowledged by many of the German nobles. After various contentions, the two rivals passed into Italy. Lothaire, who was the first to arrive at Rome, was crowned by the pope; but as he died shortly afterwards, no opposition was made to the subsequent consecration of Conrad. Both these emperors seem to have been content with the nominal recognition of their authority by the cities, and merely received from them a certain gratuitous supply of provisions, entitled "Fodrum Regale." On the death of Conrad in 1152, the claims of his son were set aside in favour of his nephew, Frederic Barbarossa. This measure is said to have been counselled by Conrad himself before his demise, as the father of Frederic had married a princess of the family of Guelf, and it was hoped that the issue of this marriage might find favour in the eyes of both families, and so terminate the factions that had so long rent the empire. But in Italy he was regarded as the representative of the Ghibellines; and he took so conspicuous a part in the affairs of that country, that, after his death, that name of Ghibelline was given to all those Italians who were supposed to be favourable to his policy or to the interests of his successors. The opponents of this party were called Guelfs, after the hereditary rivals of their paternal ancestors.

In the year 1154 the new emperor came to Italy for the purpose of being crowned, and, not being content with the phantom of authority that had been left to his immediate predecessors, he desired to exercise over the Italian cities all the rights of sovereignty that had been assumed by, or granted to, the founders of the empire. To give effect to his views, he endeavoured to control the consular elections, in which former emperors had never interfered, and he sent to each city a governor of his own, under the title of Podesta. It was not long before the Milanese formed a powerful league against him, which was joined by all the communities of Lombardy, with the exception of a few which stood aloof from ancient jealousy. The pope put himself at the head of the party opposed to the emperor, and his example was followed by most of the provincial clergy.

The war which thus broke out continued with various success for nearly thirty years. Though Frederic gained many advantages in the field, the cities, like the fabled giant of yore, seemed to gain strength by every successive defeat. Every act of vengeance intended to terrify them excited their spirit; every reverse showed them the necessity of union and organisation. Twice was Milan taken: the latter time she was compelled to surrender at discretion, and utterly destroyed by the emperor. Crema shared the same fate: the pontifical city was taken and subdued, and the pope was compelled to escape by the Tiber from the castle of St Angelo. But when fortune seemed thus about to declare for the emperor, he was first taught, by a severe

visitation of Providence, that his labour was but in vain. A sickness broke out in the camp, which carried off the flower of his army, and he was with difficulty able to escape with a remnant of his shattered forces across the Mont Cenis. On a subsequent occasion, his army suffered so much in the same manner before Alessandria, a new city which had been built by the Lombard league, and called after the reigning pontiff, that he seemed incapable of offering any resistance to the forces which were approaching to attack him. The confederate cities, in the hour of their triumph, showed a singular spirit of moderation: they declined to push matters to extremities by destroying his army, and merely insisted that he should disband his foreign forces and treat with them at Pavia. They were unable, however, to lay the foundations of a lasting peace; and in the following year hostilities were renewed, which terminated with the rout and total destruction of the imperial forces at Legnano, whence the emperor himself was obliged to escape in disguise. The decisive victory gained by the leaguers made the emperor consent to an armistice for six years; at the termination of which, whatever his restless spirit might have desired, the Germans refused to renew a contest which was frequently attended with disaster, and where even the most decisive victories failed to produce any adequate result. In 1184 the ambassadors of the emperor and the delegates of the cities assembled at Constance, for the purpose of permanently settling the rights of the contending parties. A treaty was agreed upon there, whereby the cities were

guaranteed in the enjoyment of all the republican rights which they could claim by usage; among which, those of levying war, of erecting fortifications, and of administering civil and criminal justice, were specially mentioned. The nomination of the magistrates was also left absolutely to the citizens; but those that were chosen by them had to go through the form of receiving the investiture of their office from an imperial legate. The customary tributes of provision during the emperor's residence in Italy were preserved, and he was authorised to appoint, in every city, a judge of appeal in civil cases. The league of the cities for their mutual defence, which had been formed in their wars against Frederic, was confirmed; but they were every ten years to take an oath of allegiance to the emperor. From this, however, was to be excepted the city and the territories of Rome, in which the emperor was to resign those small vestiges of authority which had been conceded to him by the cities of Lombardy—a circumstance deserving notice, as the Roman pontiffs, though they had taken upon themselves to appoint and to depose monarchs, had never previously been acknowledged as independent sovereigns.

The emperor, after the treaty of Constance, and his reconciliation with the pope, found, in the crusade against Saladin, employment for that ambition which he had been unable to satisfy in the plains of Lombardy. A fever, brought on by bathing in the Cnidus, released his restless spirit from its tenement of clay. He was succeeded in the empire by his son Henry VI. This

prince was destined, by his marriage, to exercise as great an influence over the destinies of Italy as his father had done by his wars and negotiations. By his union with Constance, daughter and sole heiress of William Guiscard, the kingdom of Naples became attached to the dominions of the representatives of the all-powerful house of Suabia, and involved in the politics of Italy and Europe. Henry was succeeded in his hereditary dominions by his son Frederic, and in the empire by Otho, duke of Bavaria. The new emperor, though belonging to the party which had always maintained the cause of the church and the Italian republics against his predecessors, soon found himself involved in hostilities with Pope Innocent III., a man possessed of many of the virtues and faults of Pope Gregory VII.; and the pontiff, in revenge, raised up a rival to him in the person of Frederic of Suabia, already king of the two Sicilies. The death of Otho occurring six years afterwards, left the young prince in undisputed possession of the imperial sceptre.

The succession of a member of the house of Suabia rekindled the flames of discord which had been partially extinguished during the reign of an emperor of the house of Bavaria. The republican party, in noways satisfied by the concessions of the first Frederic, or mollified by a long period of repose, endeavoured to withhold from the present emperor the little more than nominal rights of sovereignty that had been accorded to his grandfather. In this fresh contest they were soon joined by the Pope Gelasius, who, as his predecessor had been

the first to assist Frederic to his greatness, was sorely disappointed in not finding in him the most implicit obedience. It was at this time, too, that the party names of Ghibelline and Guelf, which had hitherto been confined to Germany, passed into Italy. The former was, of course, given to the supporters of the emperor, the latter to the party of the church; and both continued in the peninsula long after the imperial crown had passed from the descendants of the house of Suabia.

The remaining history of this emperor presents little more than the recurrence of a series of contests of the same nature as those in which his grandfather was engaged. They only differ from them in that they were carried on by him rather for the maintenance of just rights than for the suppression of constitutional freedom, and in that his hostility was directed more against the party of the pope than against any association of cities. Thus, as every lover of constitutional freedom will incline to the part of the cities in their contest with the first Frederic, so every hater of anarchy, and every opponent of priestly usurpation, will wish that the victory had been on the side of the second. Successive pontiffs continued to pronounce excommunications—one even attempted to get up a crusade against him; and in the year 1245, Innocent IV. had him formally deposed by a council at Lyons. He, however, had some advantage in being able to employ as soldiers the Saracen inhabitants of his hereditary dominions of Naples and Sicily, who laughed at the papal weapons of

excommunication, before which the Germans not unfrequently trembled. He maintained himself with ability and perseverance till the defeat and captivity of his natural son Hensius, in the year 1249. The battle in which this took place was principally between the forces of the Bolognese and Modenese, and had arisen out of a ridiculous quarrel about the abstraction of a pitcher, which has formed the subject of the celebrated mock-heroic poem of Tassoni; and it might not seem likely to have been attended with any important results upon the general issues of the war. But time and toil had produced their effects upon the emperor. His spirit was completely broken by the misfortune of his son. Both the temporal power and the spiritual influence of the Holy See was greater than it ever had been before, and excommunication was no longer devoid of terror for him who in his youth had attacked and defeated the pope with Saracen soldiers, and was strongly suspected of having been the author of the book entitled *De Tribus Impostoribus*, a term applied therein to the founders of the Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan religions. To be reconciled to the head of the church, he implored the assistance and mediation of St Louis of France, then absent in Cyprus, and expired before his wishes could be gratified.

The final penitence of Frederic did not wipe out the imputations of infidelity which, for the reasons above alluded to, were attached to his character; and his availing himself of the services of Infidels and foreigners must have in no small degree offended the reverential

feelings of the Christians and the patriotism of the Italians. Some opinion may be formed of the manner in which his reputation suffered in consequence, from the circumstance that Dante, who was accused of being a violent Ghibelline partisan, and was certainly no favourer of pontifical ambition, places him in hell.* The termination of his reign may be looked upon as the commencement of a new era in the history of Italy.

* *Inferno*, x. 119. It might, however, have been some comfort to his friends and admirers, to find him in company with a man whom all historians and commentators think deserving of a better place.

CHAPTER II.

State of Italy after the death of Frederic II. — Geographical arrangement of the cities. — Origin and early history of Venice, Pisa, Genoa, and Florence.

The death of Frederic II. was followed by an interregnum of sixty years in the empire. The former event completely established the predominance of the papal power in Italy. In consequence of the latter, the Lombard republics ceased to have that solicitude for their liberty which, in spite of the rigid adherence of Frederic Barbarossa and his successors to the treaty of Constance, they always appear to have entertained under the Ghibelline emperors.

The expression of Sallust with regard to the Roman republic, "It is incredible in how short a time the state increased after it had gained its liberty," may be applied with equal justice to the cities that had sprung from the ashes of the Roman empire, and extorted their freedom from those who claimed to be the successors of the Cæsars. The causes of their rapid growth must be familiar to every one who has paid any attention to the laws which regulate the wealth of nations. The conversion of the idle retainers of a barbarous king, or of a feudal lord, into productive labourers; the absence of

tyranny, and of the fear of confiscation; the absolute certainty felt by every industrious man that he will be allowed to enjoy the fruits of his own labour; the interest taken by each citizen in the wellbeing of a state of which he was, or fancied himself, an independent member; the prevalent notion that merit, and not favour, led to promotion,—were productive of their natural effects, both in the ancient mistress of the world and in the cities in whose fame Italy was destined to revive. But in both cases the intoxication of prosperity was followed by its usual results. The causes of the rapid degeneracy of republican states are as easy to explain as those of their rapid rise. For as it is with individual men, so it is with the collection of individuals that constitute a nation: the former require more than ordinary strength of character to stand a succession of good fortune; the latter need more than ordinary virtue to stand the great material prosperity which is the inevitable result of liberty. The career of many obscure individuals has been like that of the monarch who, in his youth, desired wisdom and virtue more than riches and power, but as soon as silver had become as plentiful as paving-stones in his capital, went a-whoring after other gods. The story of the plodding citizen, who in his youth was content with one dish on week-days, and a pudding on the Lord's day, but after he had grown wealthy took a bribe, cursed his God, and died, will find many analogies in real life. The records that we have of the times of Marius and Sylla show how fallen was the state of those concerning whose fore-

fathers it was said, that it would be easier to turn the sun from its course than to seduce them from the path of virtue. The sons of the victors of Legnano degenerated more rapidly even than the descendants of those who had stained with Punic blood the waters of the Mediterranean. Their fate should be pregnant with instruction to all who maintain that a government has to attend only to the material prosperity of a nation, and that it may leave its morality to take care of itself. If the former be attained, it certainly cannot continue without the latter. The Italian republics fell, because they had not derived, either from philosophy or religion, sufficient virtue to stand their premature prosperity. Let their history be a warning to us; and in their fall let us "think of our own, despite our watery wall."

Hitherto the states of the peninsula had, for the most part, either acted together or been divided into two great parties, according as they favoured or opposed the claims of the emperors. No notice has, therefore, been taken of the fortunes of any one of them apart from the others. But since, as soon as they were freed from the fear of the common foe, they took to squabbling among themselves, it will be necessary to bestow separate attention on those that began from that time to assume a prominent position.

The adoption of the geographical arrangement of the cities, made by Mr Hallam, will considerably facilitate the understanding of their subsequent history. They may be considered as divided into four groups or clusters, the first comprehending the cities of Western

Lombardy, bounded by the Adige, the Alps, and the Ligurian mountains, of which Milan may be reckoned the chief; the second containing those of Lombardy east of the Adige, the principal of which are Verona, Vicenza, Mantua, Padua, and Trevigi; in the third may be placed the republics south of the Po, including some in that part of the Romagna that had been originally assigned to the church, of which Ravenna, Modena, Ferrara, Bologna, Forli, and Rimini, were the chief; and in the fourth the cities of Tuscany, whose fortunes are related in Florentine history. In addition to these republics, the history of each of the maritime states of Genoa, Pisa, and Venice is worthy of separate notice. The rest of Italy was comprised in the dominions of the Church and the kingdom of Naples.

The three above-named maritime republics had hitherto taken little part in the general affairs of Italy, but they were certainly more powerful and wealthy than the other cities of the age. Piracy and pilgrimage, which, according to Gibbon, brought all the nations of the middle ages into intercourse, were the chief causes of their rise. The origin of Venice, at the time that Italy was invaded by the Huns under Attila, has already been mentioned. After their retreat, each fresh invasion of barbarians augmented the number of refugees who sought shelter in the sand-banks north of the Adriatic, and infused fresh elements of strength into the new community. The people who had carried with them the remains of Roman civilisation looked down, as might be expected, upon the barbarian governors of

Italy; they refused to acknowledge the sovereignty of any, with the exception, perhaps, of the semi-civilised Theodoric. In the beginning of the sixth century they were considerably annoyed by the Sclaves, a set of Eastern barbarians, who had overrun several provinces of the Greek Empire, and established themselves on the Illyrian coast of the Adriatic. The depredations of these troublesome neighbours was the first cause of the Venetians betaking themselves to sea, where their efforts made in self-defence imparted to them the skill, and their successes endowed them with the confidence, necessary for those who would be rulers of the ocean. Their victories over the Sclaves had made them masters of a considerable portion of Dalmatia, so early as the year 527. In the year 697, they adopted the form of government which, in the preceding century, had been established by Longinus in the rest of Italy: the office of Duke, which was subsequently called Doge, was first conferred upon Paul Luc Anapert. In the time of Pepin and Charlemagne they maintained their independence of the Franks, as well as of the Lombards, both of whom they looked down upon as barbarians; but they were willing to be the allies, and sometimes even to claim the protection, or acknowledge the supremacy, of the more civilised Greeks. The destruction of several of their cities by the Franks first induced them to make the Rialto the seat of their government. The increasing feebleness of the Greeks was peculiarly favourable to their rising fortune: the former, unable to protect their remaining possessions against their multitudi-

nous assailants, conceded to the cities of Dalmatia and Illyria the right of defending themselves; and these cities, having formed an association against a new set of pirates, the Narentines, put the Venetians at their head. The same success that, four centuries before, had attended their efforts against the Sclaves crowned those made against the new disturbers of their tranquillity, whom they completely drove from the north of the Adriatic. The fate that invariably attends states that trust to the protection of a powerful neighbour against a distant foe befel the Greek cities of the Adriatic—they became the subjects of her whose alliance they had sought as a boon. In the year 997, Pietro Ursulo, the chief of the Venetians, received the homage of many of these cities and islands, and acquired for himself and his successors the title of Doge of Venice and Dalmatia.

The armed pilgrimage of the nations of Europe, to expel the Saracens from the Holy City, completed for Venice what the piracy of the Sclaves and Narentines had begun. The incursions of the latter had forced them to build, for purposes of defence, the ships which now yielded them considerable profits, by conveying the troops of the Crusaders to the coast of Syria; and the supplying these warriors with provisions soon opened to them a lucrative trade with the nations of the East. In the words of M. Sismondi, the citizens, uniting commerce with warfare, brought the richest cargoes to Venice in fleets, which made the Infidels tremble. Their naval strength in the year 1099 was

computed at two hundred vessels. In the new Latin kingdom of Jerusalem they established several small colonies, whose inhabitants were ruled by their laws, and in every respect treated as subjects. In their return from the Crusades, the Venetians, forgetful of their ancient ties of friendship and allegiance, ravaged several of the Greek islands, and enlarged their dominions on the coasts of the Adriatic.

The rise of Pisa began at a period long posterior to that of Venice. The first notice that we have of its maritime importance is in the year 980, when Otho II. asked its inhabitants to supply him with vessels to conquer the two Sicilies.* The Saracen pirates excited the maritime energy of her inhabitants, as the Sclaves and Narentines had roused that of the Venetians; the neighbouring cities of the Maremma put themselves under her protection as those of Dalmatia had done with Venice, and in time underwent the same fate. The possession of the island of Corsica was a subject of contention between them and Muset, king of the Moors, whom they expelled from it in the year 1017, and again in the year 1050. In the year 1100 they furnished a fleet of a hundred and twenty vessels to the Crusaders, though they did not make the same advantageous terms for themselves as the Venetians had done. The spirit of jealousy that could not fail to arise between these two maritime states showed itself in their fights at the

* M. Sismondi, in a note, says that previous to that period, Gaiaiter, prince of Salerno, committed the defence of part of the walls of that place to some Tuscans, who must have been Pisans.

island of Rhodes. In 1108 Tancred, the hero of Tasso, conceded to the Pisans the same privileges of establishing colonies in the East that were enjoyed by their rivals.

Genoa, divided from the plains of Lombardy by an amphitheatre of hills which rise in successive ridges above the sea, was never much occupied by the Lombards, and remained subject to the Greeks long after the former had been firmly established in their other possessions. Thus the elements of civilisation which had to be re-formed in the rest of Italy were never entirely extinguished in it, and this circumstance was probably one of the causes of its early pre-eminence. The necessity of holding communication by sea with the eastern metropolis, and its dependencies in Italy, to which access by land in the turbulent reign of the Lombards was difficult, caused its sons to turn their attention to navigation. In the year 936 their city was taken and pillaged by the Saracens, and the losses they sustained on this occasion for a time made them inferior to the Pisans. But the successes of the latter against Muset strongly excited their jealousy, and aroused their energy. In a short time the protection of Genoa was sought, and her supremacy was acknowledged by the cities of the Riviera, as that of Pisa and Venice had been by their maritime neighbours. She was, however, able to furnish only twenty-seven vessels to the Crusaders. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the twelfth century, she sustained a war of fourteen years with Pisa. The taking of Constantinople by the Latins, which enabled her to establish the colony of Pera on the Golden Horn, besides

several others in the Black Sea, considerably augmented her resources.

Among the inland republics, that of Florence became so conspicuous in the subsequent annals of Italy that its state at the time of Frederic II.'s death is deserving of notice. The city itself had been originally founded by the inhabitants of Fiesole, an old Roman colony, the ruins of which may still be seen on a hill overlooking the valley of the Arno, the steepness and ruggedness of which were said, even in the fourteenth century, to have left their impress on the character and temper of those that dwelt beneath.* At the time that Pisa was clearing the Mediterranean of pirates, or transporting the wealth of the East to the shores of Italy and France, the history of Florence is involved in partial obscurity, and her happy state at that period, if there is not much exaggeration in the encomiums of Dante,† must have verified a celebrated adage of the Greek tragedian.‡ She appears never to have shown any opposition to the claims of the emperors, and when they were not in a position to enforce their authority she yielded a ready obedience to the dukes and marquises of Tuscany. About the middle

"Quello ingrato popolo maligno
Che discese di Fiesole ab antico,
E tiene ancor del monte e del macigno."

Dante, *Inf.* xv. 60.

† *Paradiso*, xvi., throughout.

‡ "Αι δ' ἡσυχοι σκοτειναὶ πράσσουσαι πόλεις
σκοτειναὶ καὶ βλέπουσιν ἐνλαβούμεναι." *

Eurip. *Supplices*, 324.

* "States whose history is obscure,
Though seen obscurely are blessed."

of the twelfth century, in consequence of the will of the Countess Matilda, she became part of the property of the church; but she soon afterwards returned to the dominion of her old feudal lords. Thus, while the other cities of Italy were suffering from the violence of civil wars and internal dissensions, the Florentines remained a united people, obedient always to the will of the conquerors, and seeking no boon but to be allowed to live in peace.* In the words of Dante—

"Fu glorioso
È guisto 'l popol suo tanto, che 'l giglio
Non era ad asta mai posto a ritroso,
Nè per division fatto vermiglio."†

But as bodily infirmities, the later they come, are the more pregnant with danger, and are more likely to be fatal,‡ so Florence, too, as she had been the last to engage in the party politics of Italy, was afterwards more afflicted and lacerated thereby than any other city in the peninsula. She was first led to take a part therein in consequence of internal divisions arising from a private quarrel about an alleged breach of marriage. The name of the recusant bridegroom's family was Buondelmonte, that of the family who considered themselves aggrieved Uberto. Dante laments the evils that this quarrel caused to flow upon his country and his people in the following passage—

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* MACHIAVELLI, *Ist.* lib. 2.

† "Saw her so glorious and so just, that ne'er
The lily from the lance had hung reverse,
Or through division been with vermeil dyed."
Par. xvi. 148.

‡ MACHIAVELLI, *Ist.* lib. 2.

"La casa di che nacque il vostro fleto,
Per lo giusto disdegno che v' ha morti
E posto fine al vostro viver lieto,
Era onorata essa e suoi consorti.
O Buondelmonte, quanto mal fuggisti
Le nozze sue per gli altrui conforti!
Molti sarebber lieti, che son tristi,
Se Dio t' avesse conceduto ad Ema
La prima volta ch' a città venisti."*

Buondelmonte was finally killed in a tumult at the foot of the statue of Mars—a circumstance which, seventy years afterwards, was looked upon as ominous of the dissensions which he first introduced into the hitherto tranquil city. It is alluded to by the poet in the following verses—

"Ma conveniasi a quella pietra scema
Che guarda 'l ponte, che Fiorenza fesse
Vittima nella sua pace postrema."†

This act of violence extinguished all hopes of an amicable adjustment of the difference between the two powerful families; the whole city was forthwith divided into factions, one determined to avenge the death of the murdered man, the other equally resolved to resist any deed of aggression on the part of those who fancied

* "The house, from whence your tears have had their spring,
Through the just anger, that hath murder'd ye
And put a period to your gladsome days,
Was honour'd; it, and those consorted with it.
O Buondelmonti! what ill counselling
Prevail'd on thee to break the plighted bond?
Many, who now are weeping, would rejoice,
Had God to Ema given thee, the first time
Thou near our city camest." *Par.* xvi. 135.

† "But so was doom'd:
Florence! on that maim'd stone which guards the bridge,
The victim, whence thy peace departed, fell."
Par. xvi. 144.

themselves injured. Both parties, says Machiavelli, were strong in fortified castles, in connections, and in the numbers of their adherents, and thus they continued at enmity for the space of thirty years, till Frederic II. entered the city and espoused the cause of the Uberti. By his powerful assistance the Buondelmonti were banished. The exiled party naturally became Guelfs, as their opponents, being supported by the emperor, of course became Ghibellines. So universal was the spirit of party at this time, and so great was its supposed influence over the subsequent fortunes of the city, that the names of the principal families attached to each side have been preserved.* Such was the origin of the contentions that, for more than two centuries, continued to prevail in the city which was the abode of Dante and Boccaccio, of Michael Angelo and Lorenzo di Medici.

* MACHIAVELLI, *Ist.* lib. 2.

CHAPTER III.

KINGDOM OF NAPLES.—DEATH OF CONRAD.—DEFEAT AND DEATH OF MANFRED —AND OF CONRADIN.—CHARLES OF ANJOU, HIS TALENTS AND SUCCESS.— ISLAND OF SICILY REVOLTS TO PETER OF ARAGON.—CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF THE SUCCESSORS OF CHARLES AND PETER.—ROMAN PONTIFFS.— CHARACTER AT THE END OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.—POPE BONIFACE —HIS QUARREL WITH PHILIP LE BEL—IS CAST INTO PRISON, WHERE HE EXPIRES.—REMOVAL OF THE PONTIFICAL RESIDENCE TO AVIGNON.—ITALY NEGLECTED BY THE EMPERORS TILL THE EXPEDITION OF HENRY VII.—HIS DEATH AND CHARACTER.—CONSTITUTION ESTABLISHED AT FLORENCE.— VARIOUS CHANGES.—FIRST WAR WITH PISA.—FACTIONS OF THE BIANCHI AND NERI.—DANTE THE POET—HIS BANISHMENT.—SUBSEQUENT STATE OF THE CITY.—LOMBARD REPUBLICS.—MILAN.—ORIGIN OF THE POWER OF THE VISCONTI.—EXPULSION OF THEIR RIVALS.—MARQUISES OF MONTFERRAT, AND COUNTS OF SAVOY.—RISE AND RUIN OF ECCELINO AT PADUA.—POWER OF THE FAMILY LA SCALA IN EASTERN LOMBARDY.—ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY OF ESTE AT FERRARA.—REPUBLICS OF ROMAGNA.—STATE OF VENICE AND GENOA.

THE hostility of the pontiffs to the house of Suabia did not cease after the death of Frederic. The heads of the Christian church continued to visit the sins of that emperor upon successive generations of his descendants. Innocent IV. lost no time in making himself master of the city of Naples. Here, however, he had soon to encounter the opposition of Conrad, the lawful heir of Frederic, who died in the year 1354, while his son Conradin was yet under age. The management of the kingdom of the Two Sicilies was undertaken by Manfred, natural son of Frederic, a prince of no ordinary abilities, who, either for the sake of strengthening his tempo-

rary authority, or, as is more likely, with the view of retaining the regal power in his own hands, gave out that Conradin was dead, and proclaimed himself king of Naples. The vigour and abilities of Manfred, displayed in the rapid reorganisation of the Ghibelline party, which had become formidable under so able a chief, struck terror into the breast of the successor of Innocent, Pope Urban IV., who, like some of his predecessors, endeavoured to persuade men that his own interests were identical with those of the kingdom of Christ, and preached a crusade against the king of Naples. Lest the spiritual zeal of the princes of Christendom should fail to supply him with succours sufficient to rid him of such a powerful adversary, he whetted the ambition of a son of the king of France, Charles, prince of Anjou, by assigning to him the kingdom of the Sicilies, which the bishops of Rome had never ceased to claim as a fief of the Holy See. Manfred lost no time in organising an army sufficiently powerful to oppose the invading forces of the Frenchman: fortune, however, was against him. After a most heroic resistance, he was defeated and slain in the year 1166, near Benevento. In spite of his suspicious conduct as regards the kingdom of his nephew, his origin, his talents, and his heroic defence of his country against a foreigner, have always caused him to be ranked among the heroes of Italian history. Even if he had possessed no merits of his own, Dante's beautiful description of him in the lines—

"Biondo era e bello e di gentile aspetto,
Ma l' un de' cigli un colpo avea diviso,"*

could hardly fail to impart a degree of interest to his character and adventures. Perhaps it might be difficult to find a more impartial estimate of his actual deserts than that given in the words which the poet puts into his mouth—

"Orribil furon li peccati miei;
Ma la bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia,
Che prende ciò che si rivolve a lei." †

The enmity displayed to his very memory by the successor of Urban, Clement IV., by whose order the bishop of Cosenza refused to allow his body to be buried in consecrated ground, has received notoriety from the following lines—

"Se 'l pastor di Cosenza ch' alla caccia
Di me fu messo per Clemente, allora
Avesse in Dio ben letta questa faccia,
L' ossa del corpo mio sarieno ancora
In co del ponte presso a Benevento,
Sotto la guardia della grave mora.
Or le bagna la pioggia e muove 'l vento."‡

Three years afterwards, Charles defeated Conradin,

* "Comely and fair, and gentle of aspect
He seem'd, but on one brow a gash was marked."
Purg. iii. 105.

† "My sins were horrible: but so wide arms
Hath goodness infinite, that it receives
All who turn to it."
Purg. iii. 118.

‡ "Had this text divine
Been of Cosenza's shepherd better scann'd,
Who then by Clement on my hunt was set,
Yet at the bridge's head my bones had lain,
Near Benevento, by the heavy mole
Protected; but the rain now drenches them,
And the wind drives." *Purg.* iii. 120.

the lawful heir of Conrad, at Tagliacozzo, and sullied his victory by the execution of his rival. This act of barbarism was merely the prelude to a series of cruelties by which he endeavoured to avenge himself on his enemies, and to extirpate his opponents. In prosecution of the latter purpose, he succeeded in completely annihilating or banishing from his dominions the race of Infidels, of whose assistance Frederic and Manfred had continually availed themselves in their wars against the reputed head of the church. His unrelenting persecution of the Sicilians, among whom the Saracens were principally located, drove the former to the frenzy of despair; and after a slight provocation given by one of his soldiers in the year 1282, they rose up with one accord, and butchered, or banished from the island, all the French. Having thus shaken off the yoke of the conquerors, they transferred their allegiance to Peter of Aragon, husband of Manfred's daughter Constance, called by Dante

"Mia bella figlia, genitrice
Dell' onor di Cicilia e d' Aragona,"*

with whom they had for some time past been carrying on negotiations. The husband of Constance is alluded to by the same poet in the well-known lines—

"Quel che par si membruto e che s'accorda
Cantando con colui del maschio naso,
D'ogni valor cinta porto la corda."†

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* "My fair daughter go, the parent glad
Of Aragonia, and Sicilia's pride."—*Purg.* iii. 115.

† "He so robust of limb, who measure keeps
In song with him of feature prominent,
With every virtue bore his girdle braced."—*Purg.* vii. 112.

An attempt to reconquer the island was made by the son of the king of Naples, afterwards known as Charles II. He was, however, taken prisoner in an engagement with the fleet of Peter; but on the death of his father, two years afterwards, he was liberated, on the condition of his consenting to the independence of Sicily. But after the death of Peter of Aragon, the head of the Christian church released him from his engagements. Peter was succeeded in his Sicilian dominions by his sons James and Frederic successively, whose inferiority to their sire and to their elder brother, who inherited the throne of Aragon, is thus lamented by Dante—

"E se re dopo lui fosse rimaso
Lo giovinetto che retro a lui siede,
Bene andava il valor di vaso in vaso;
Che non si puote dir dell' altre rede.
Giacopo e Federigo hanno i reami:
Del retaggio miglior nessun possiede.
Rade volte risurge per li rami
L'umana probitate." *

But Charles II. was also inferior to his father, and the hatred of the Sicilians to the house of Anjou was so great that, in spite of the incapacity of their rulers, they succeeded in maintaining their independence. In the year 1303, Frederic was formally acknowledged king of Sicily. Charles died six years afterwards. His eldest

* "And if that stripling, who behind him sits,
King after him had lived, his virtue then
From vessel to like vessel had been pour'd;
Which may not of the other heirs be said.
By James and Frederick his realms are held;
Neither the better heritage obtains.
Rarely into the branches of the tree
Doth human worth mount up."
Purg. vii. 116.

son, Charles Martel, had succeeded to the kingdom of Hungary in right of his mother, and died in the year 1297. Dante makes him tell his own story, and the expectations that awaited him had he survived his father, in the following words—

"Il mondo m' ebbe
Poco tempo; e, se piu fosse stato,
Molto sara di mal, che non sarebbe.
. . . .
Quella sinistra riva che si lava,
Di Rodano, poi ch' è misto con Sorga,
Per suo signore al tempo m' aspettava;
E quel corno d' Ausonia che sí imborga
Di Bari, di Gaeta, e di Cortona,
Da onde Tronto e Verde in mare sgorga,
Fulgea mi gia in fronte la corona,
Di quella terra ch' il Danubio riga
Poi che la ripa Tedesca abandona." *

Nor was his son Carlo Hubert allowed to realise these expectations, as the kingdoms of Naples and Provence were assigned to Charles II.'s second son, Robert, who appears to have inherited much of his grandfather's talents.

* "A short date below
The world possessed me: had the time been more,
Much evil that will come, had never chanced.
. . . . . .
The left bank
That Rhone, when he hath mixed with Sorga, laves,
In me its lord expected; and that horn
Of fair Ausonia with its boroughs old,
Bari and Croton, and Gaeta piled,
From where the Trento disembogues his waves,
With Verde mingled, to the salt sea flood.
Already on my temples beamed the crown
Which gave me sovereignty over the land
By Danube washed, whereas he strays beyond
The limits of his German shores."
Par. viii. 49.

The period that elapsed from the death of Frederic II. till the defeat of Conradin at Tagliacozzo may be said to be the culminating point of the power of the popes. The Ghibellines were completely subdued in every city of Italy, with the exception of Florence; and whatever hopes they may have entertained from the talents of Manfred seemed to have been completely crushed by the result of the battle of Benevento. But the immoderate ambition of Charles of Anjou soon benefited them in the same manner that that of Frederic Barbarossa had formerly imparted strength to the party of the church. As there was, at this time, no emperor in Germany, Charles persuaded the pope to nominate him imperial vicar; and the papal interregnum of thirty-three months, which followed the death of Clement, appeared to him a favourable opportunity of making himself master of Italy. For this purpose he convoked a diet of the Lombard cities at Cremona, where some of them agreed to defer to his authority; and others, though they would not take him as their lord, said that they would feel honoured by his alliance and friendship. But in these ambitious projects he was violently opposed, both by the heads of the old Ghibelline party, and by many patriotic Italians, who became attached thereto for the same reasons that their ancestors had joined the Guelfs.* The result was, that every city in the peninsula was torn by the most violent internal dissen-

* I have no doubt but that the politics of Dante's family may be taken as an example of those of many patriotic Italians. The poet was born about the year 1267—his ancestors were Guelfs, he became a Ghibelline.

sions. In the words of Muratori, for a considerable time the greater part of Italy was in a state of ruin; and factions and civil discords began to acquire fresh vigour in the cities. Thirty years afterwards the Tuscan poet laments the state to which his country was then reduced, in the following verses—

"Ahi serva Italia, di dolore ostello,
Nave senza nocchiero in gran tempesta,
Non donna di provincie, ma bordello!
. . . . . .
Ed ora in te non stanno senza guerra
Li vivi tuoi, e l' un l' altro si rode
Di que' i ch' un muro ed una fossa serra." *

The papal interregnum ceased in the year 1271, on the election of Gregory X. The sole aim of the new pontiff was said to be public good and universal peace. While he steadily opposed the ambition of Charles, he endeavoured to allay the factions which raged in every state in the peninsula; and, under the vain hope of finding some one to whom they might look up in their troubles, he persuaded the electors of Germany to choose an emperor from their countrymen. But the death of this pontiff, which took place five years after his accession, extinguished all hopes of allaying the troubles of Italy. The characters of his successors were not such

* "Ah, slavish Italy! thou inn of grief!
Vessel without a pilot in loud storm!
Lady no longer of fair provinces,
But brothel-house impure!
. . . . . .
While now thy living ones
In thee abide not without war; and one
Malicious gnaws another; ay, of those
Whom the same wall and the same moat contains."
Purg. vi. 76.

as were likely to have any influence with the contending parties, or indeed to obtain any respect for the heads of the church. Most of them were chiefly intent upon enriching themselves or aggrandising their relations, and they have received a most unenviable notoriety from having been described as undergoing the most grotesque punishments in the *Inferno* of Dante. After three ephemeral popes, the holy chair was occupied by one of the noble Roman family of Orsini, under the title of Nicholas III. This pontiff was a most unflinching opponent of Charles of Anjou, and showed little scruple in the measures he took for the advancement either of his own family or of the church. He compelled the king of Naples to resign the title of imperial vicar, which had been conceded to him by Clement IV., and supported Peter of Aragon in his claims to the kingdom of Sicily. From the Emperor Rodolph he procured an acknowledgment of all the documents, whether real or spurious, which guaranteed the independence of the Territories of the Church. But he made every object subservient to that of gaining riches for himself, and power for his relations. For the part he took against Charles he is said to have taken money from Peter of Aragon, as is implied in the following expression of Dante—

"Guarda ben la mal tolta moneta
Ch' esser ti fece contro Carlo ardito." *

Machiavelli says of him that, with the view of pro-

* "And look thou well to that ill-gotten coin,
Which against Charles thy hardihood inspired."
Inf. xix. 103.

tecting the church both against the French, who were then in Italy, and against the Germans, who might at any future time be there, he entertained the design of making two kings of his own family, the one to reign in Tuscany, the other in Lombardy. His partiality to those of his own name is briefly alluded to by Dante in the following pithy expressions—

"Veramente fui figliuol dell' orsa,
Cupido sì per avanzar gli orsatti,
Che," &c. *

The grotesque nature of the punishment awarded to him by Dante is as follows—

"Fuor della bocca a ciascun soperchiava
D' un peccator li piedi e delle gambe
Infino al grosso, e l' altro dentro stava.
Le piante erano accese a tutti intrambe:
Perchè sì forte guizzavan le giunte,
Che spezzate averian ritorte e strambe.
Qual suole il fiammeggiar delle cose unte
Muoversi pur su per l' estrema buccia:
Tal era lì da' calcagni alle punte.
Chi è colui, maestro, che si cruccia
Guizzando più che gli altri suoi consorti,
. . . e cui più rossa fiamma succia?" †

---

* "And of a she-bear was indeed the son,
So eager to advance my whelps, that," &c.
Inf. xix. 72.

† "From out the mouth
Of every one emerged a sinner's feet,
And of the legs high upward as the calf.
The rest beneath was hid. On either foot
The soles were burning; whence the flexile joints
Glanced with such violent motion, as had snapped
Asunder cords or twisted withes. As flame,
Feeding on unctuous matter, glides along
The surface, scarcely touching where it moves;
So here, from heel to point, glided the flames.
'Master! say who is he, than all the rest
Glancing in fiercer agony, on whom
A ruddier flame doth prey?'" *Ibid.* xix. 24.

After his death, Charles managed to get a creature of his own elected in his place. One Martin of Tours, a Frenchman by birth, was chosen under the title of Martin IV. So well did he do the bidding of his patron that, in the words of the annalist of Italy, he emptied the treasury of excommunications against all Ghibellines, and against any one who was supposed to be lukewarm in his attachment to Charles. He seems, however, to have been free from many of the vices which caused such scandal against the church; for Dante, the great censor of the public characters of that period, merely finds fault with him for his addiction to the pleasures of the table, to which he alludes in the following words—

"Purga per digiuno
L'anguille di Bolsena in la vernaccia;"*

and assigns him no worse punishment than exclusion from Paradise, till he had grown thin by fasting in Purgatory.

The two immediate successors of this pontiff continued the practices of simony and nepotism, which had been begun by Nicholas III. But they had not either the mental or physical capacity to take much part in the politics of Italy; and from the declaration that Dante puts in the mouth of Nicholas III., that he did not expect to be removed from his position of torture till the death of a pontiff that came after them, it may be inferred that their practices were not so bad as to

* "Purges, by long abstinence, away
Bolsena's eels and cups of muscadel."
Purg. xxiv. 23.

condemn them to the punishment assigned to the less scrupulous followers of Simon Magus. They were succeeded by Celestine V., a man whose extraordinary mildness of disposition recommended him to Charles II., king of Naples, as likely to be a passive instrument in his hands. Singularly enough, this quality, which prevents most men from rising to fame, has immortalised him, by making him the hero of the oft-quoted line in Dante—

"Che fece per viltate il gran rifiuto."*

Finding his post little suited to his disposition, he was persuaded to resign in favour of a cardinal of considerable talent and violent temper, who succeeded him under the title of Boniface VIII. It seems strange that the humbleness of mind, contempt of the world, and delicacy of conscience, the qualities which, in the words of Muratori, induced him to take a step which all must admire, but few or none can imitate, have obtained for him no higher award from the great poet and censor of the age than to be placed among—

"L' anime triste di coloro
Che visser senza infamia e senza lode.
. . . . . .
Cacciarli i ciel per non esser men belli,
Nè lo profondo inferno li riceve,
Ch' alcuna gloria i rei avrebber d' elli."†

The abilities of the new pontiff, Boniface VIII., were

* "Who to base fear
Yielding, abjured his high estate." *Inf.* iii. 60.

† "The wretched souls of those, who lived
Without or praise or blame. . . . .
. . . . From his bounds Heaven drove them forth,
Not to impair his lustre; nor the depth
Of Hell receives them, lest the accursed tribe
Should glory thence with exultation vain." *Ibid.* iii. 35.

such as might have restored the influence of, though his general character was not likely to insure respect for, the church. But his talents proved abortive through his ungovernable temper. He soon became involved in the most violent disputes with the Colonna, one of the leading noble families at Rome, against whom he endeavoured to get up a war of extermination under the name of a crusade. To this abuse of the power intrusted to him, Dante alludes in the following verses—

> "Lo principe de' nuovi Farisei
> Avendo guerra presso a Laterano,
> E non con Saracin nè con Giudei
> (Che ciascun suo nimico era cristiano,
> E nessuno era stato a vincer Acri,
> Nè mercatante in terra di Soldano.)"*

He began by supporting Albert of Austria against Adolphus of Nassau, in his contest for the imperial crown; but when the former had succeeded, and his ambassadors had come to Rome to request the head of the Christian church to acknowledge him in his new dignity, he said that Albert was a rebel and a traitor; and putting the crown on his own head, and seizing a sword, he added, "It is I that am Cæsar—it is I that am emperor—it is I that will defend the rights of the empire." He was at first a violent supporter of the French party in Italy; and to strengthen their influence he invited Charles of Valois, brother of Philip of

* "The chief of the new Pharisees meantime,
Waging his warfare near the Lateran,
Not with the Saracens or Jews, (his foes
All Christians were, nor against Acre one
Had fought, nor traffick'd in the Soldan's land.)"
Inf. xxvii. 85.

France, to adjust the differences of Florence, and to assist Charles II. of Naples to reconquer Sicily. But, not long afterwards, the arrogance of his demands and the impetuosity of his temper involved him in a serious quarrel with the French king. The sequel of this contest is so remarkable, as having been attended with fatal consequences to the pontiff himself, and having given to the papal dignity, which Gregory and Innocent had done so much to exalt, a blow from which it never recovered, that it is deserving of special notice.

Boniface, presuming it may be either on his own power, or on the gratitude to which he thought himself entitled from the king of France, began to interfere both in the internal affairs and in the foreign policy of that kingdom more than was pleasing to Philip. At length the insolence of the pontiff reached its height, in appointing a new bishop of Pamiers, and constituting him his ambassador to Philip, under the title of apostolic legate. The king, however, showed so little respect to the representative of Boniface, that, after some differences with him, he accused him of high treason and cast him into prison. But though he thus set at defiance the person who claimed to be the head of the Christian church, he managed to secure the support of the majority of the French clergy, while the French nation in general espoused his quarrel as their own. At last one of the members of the house of Colonna, who was then residing at Paris, set out to Italy with three hundred horse; and having been joined shortly after his arrival there by a considerable body of the partisans of his family,

he seized Boniface and cast him into prison. On the 11th of October 1303, in little more than one month after his incarceration, the pontiff expired, as was supposed, of grief and passion at the indignities to which he had been subjected. This result of the pope's quarrel with Philip showed how much the pontificate had fallen in power and dignity since Frederic II. had been obliged to succumb to its opposition. And though few were inclined to respect Boniface personally, yet many regarded his treatment as an insult directed against the religion of which he was then generally allowed to be the head. The allusion made thereto by Dante,

"Veggio in Alagna entrar lo fiordaliso,
E nel vicario suo Cristo esser catto.
Veggiolo un' altra volta esser deriso:
Veggio rinnovellar l' aceto e 'l fele,
E tra vivi ladroni essere anciso.
Veggio 'l nuovo Pilato sì crudele," *

doubtless expresses the sentiments of many excellent Christians, who disapproved as much as the poet of priestly ambition and simony. However, his punishment on earth did not prevent the poet condemning him in the next world to the tortures suffered by the other popes who had been guilty of similar abuses of their power. In the passage descriptive thereof, already quoted, the last simoniacal pope, who is supposed to have the gift of

"Lo! the flower-de-luce
Enters Alagna; in his Vicar Christ
Himself a captive, and his mockery
Acted again. Lo! to his holy lip
The vinegar and gall once more applied;
And he 'twixt living robbers doom'd to bleed."
Purg. xx. 85.

seeing future events, expresses his expectation that Boniface would come to the same place of torment as himself, in the following words—

"Se' tu già costì ritto Bonifazio?

. . . . .

Se' tu sì tosto di quell' aver sazio,
Per lo qual non temesti torre a inganno
La bella donna e di poi farne strazio?"*

The various allusions made by Dante, who may be allowed to be the best historian of the times, to the evil practices of Boniface and his predecessors, are worthy of notice, as illustrating the manner in which the heads of the Christian church had abused their power and were fallen in estimation. In referring to the golden florin, which not long before had been coined at Florence, he uses the following expression—

"Il maladetto fiore
Ch' ha disviate le pecore e gli agni,
Perocchè fatto ha lupo del pastore."†

In the succeeding stanzas he gives us to understand that the besetting sin of avarice, for which he so severely censures the heads of the Christian church, had extended also to the cardinals and the clergy—

---

* "Already standest there, O Boniface!

. . . . .

So early dost thou surfeit with the wealth,
For which thou fearedst not in guile to take
The lovely lady, and then mangle her?"

Inf. xix. 53.

† "The cursed flower,
That hath made wander both the sheep and lambs,
Turning the shepherd to a wolf."

Par. ix. 130.

"Per questo l' Evangelio e i Dottor magni
Son derelitti, e solo ai Decretali
Si studia sì che pare a' lor vivagni.
A questo intende il papa e i cardinali:
Non vanno i lor pensieri a Nazzarette,
Là dove Gabbriello aperse l' ali."*

Towards the conclusion of his Divine Comedy he makes St Peter describe the vices of his then representative Boniface, in the following terms—

"Quegli ch' usurpa in terra il luogo mio,
Il luogo mio, il luogo mio che vaca
Nella presenza del Figliuol di Dio,
Fatto ha del cimiterio mio cloaca
Del sangue e della puzza, ond 'l perverso
Che cadde di quassù laggiù si placa."†

After supposing that this allusion to the avarice of the clergy causes the heavens to become dark, as at the time of the crucifixion, the poet makes the apostle proceed to say—

"Non fu la sposa di Cristo allevata
Del sangue mio, di Lin, di quel di Cleto,
Per essere ad acquisto d' oro usata."‡

---

* "For this,
The gospel and great teachers laid aside,
The decretals, as their stuft margins show,
Are the sole study. Pope and Cardinals,
Intent on these, ne'er journey but in thought
To Nazareth, where Gabriel oped his wings."
Par. ix. 133.

† "My place
He who usurps on earth, (my place, ay, mine,
Which in the presence of the Son of God
Is void,) the same hath made my cemetery
A common sewer of puddle and of blood:
The more below his triumph, who from hence
Malignant fell." *Ibid.* xxvii. 22.

‡ "Not to this end was Christ's spouse with my blood,
With that of Linus, and of Cletus, fed;
That she might serve for purchase of base gold."
Ibid. xxvii. 40.

And then, alluding to the papal interference in Italian politics, he proceeds—

" Non fu nostra intenzion ch' a destra mano
De' nostri successor parte sedesse,
Parte dall' altra del popol cristiano ;
Nè che le chiavi che mi fur concesse,
Divenisser segnacolo in vessillo
Che contra i battezzati combattesse ;
Nè ch' io fossi figura di sigillo
A' privilegi venduti e mendaci
Ond' io sovente arrosso e disfavillo." *

Perhaps there is no more remarkable passage relative to the corruption of the church in the thirteenth century than that in which he makes a comparison, which has frequently been renewed by the Protestant controversialists of later times—

" Di voi pastor s' accorse il Vangelista,
Quando colei che siede sovra l' acque
Puttaneggiar co' regi a lui fu vista :
Quella che con le sette teste nacque,
E dalle dicce corna ebbe argomento
Fin che virtute al suo marito piacque."†

And in the following stanza he expresses his opinion

* " No purpose was of ours;
That on the right hand of our successors,
Part of the Christian people should be set,
And part upon their left ; nor that the keys,
Which were vouchsafed me, should for ensign serve
Unto the banners, that do levy war
On the baptised : nor I, for sigil-mark,
Set upon sold and lying privileges :
Which makes me oft to bicker and turn red."
Par. xxvii. 46.

† " Of shepherds like to you, the Evangelist
Was ware, when her, who sits upon the waves,
With kings in filthy whoredom he beheld ;
She, who with seven heads tower'd at her birth,
And from ten horns her proof of glory drew,
Long as her spouse in virtue took delight."
Inf. xix. 109.

on the much-debated question of church endowments, which shows that, in his judgment at least, they had not worked well in his country—

> "Ahi Costantin, di quanto mal fu matre
> Non la tua conversion, ma quella dote
> Che da te prese il primo ricco patre!" *

The result of Boniface's contest with the king of France showed both the nobles of Rome and the monarchs of Europe how little they need now dread the authority of the successors of the Gregorys and Innocents. He was succeeded by Benedict XI., who has received the commendation of all historians for the amiability of his disposition and the uprightness of his intentions. But it was not long before his declared wishes to avenge the death of his predecessor made him obnoxious both to the king of France and to the powerful family of the Colonna. A few months after his election he retired to Perugia, under the pretext of seeking a cool retreat from the heats of the dog-days, but in reality, as was thought, because the hostility of the nobles had made Rome an unpleasant residence. Shortly after his arrival at his summer quarters, he expired, either from fever brought on by the season, or from poison administered by his enemies. After a short lapse of time, the pontifical dignity was conferred on Raimond, archbishop of Bordeaux, who, though chosen by one party of Roman cardinals on account of his supposed hostility

* "Ah, Constantine! to how much ill gave birth,
Not thy conversion, but that plenteous dower,
Which the first wealthy Father gain'd from thee."
Inf. xix. 118.

to the king of France, had also secured the support of that monarch, by promising to give him full pardon for his treatment of Boniface, and conceding to him many of the points which had been the cause of their disputes. The new pope took the name of Clement V. Either from love of his native country, or from fear of the turbulence of the Romans, he fixed his residence at Avignon, whither he summoned all the cardinals to attend him. Thus, says the annalist of Italy, did the apostolic see pass into France, where it remained for seventy years in a captivity similar to that of the Jews at Babylon, inasmuch as it was obliged to obey the will of the French monarchs, and caused thereby innumerable disorders, both in the church and in Italy. From the allusion to him that Dante puts in the mouth of Nicholas III. while suffering punishment in hell—

"Che dopo lui verrà di più laid' opra
Di ver ponente un pastor senza legge,
Tal che convien che lui e me ricuopra;"*

and from the following reference to him in the *Paradise*—

"Ma poco poi sarà da Dio sofferto
Nel santo uficio, ch' e' sarà detruso
Là dove Simon mago è per suo merto,"†

it may be inferred that, though he had given up the habitation, he had not forsaken the evil practices, of Nicholas and Boniface.

For upwards of half a century after the death of

* "For after him,
One yet of deeds more ugly shall arrive,
From forth the west, a shepherd without law."—*Inf.* xix. 84.

† "Whom God will not endure
I' the holy office long; but thrust him down
To Simon Magus." *Par.* xxx. 145.

Frederic, the emperors had little to do with Italy. None of his descendants ever attained the imperial dignity. After an interregnum of some years, the title of Cæsar was given to men who had never set foot in Germany, and took but little interest in the politics of central Europe. It finally passed to Rodolph of Hapsburg. The circumstance of this prince having been the first emperor, since the death of Frederic, who possessed more than the name of authority, raised the expectations of the Ghibelline chiefs, and of many excellent Italian patriots, including Pope Gregory X., who thought that order would be restored to the republics by the control of a powerful monarch. But the politics of Italy did not possess the same attractions for a native of Austria as they had done for the son of Constance of Naples. He devoted his time and his energies to the conquest of the bleak and unattractive provinces which were contiguous to the dominions of his father, and looked upon the country that was termed the garden of Europe as a remote and unmanageable dependency. For this conduct he is eulogised by M. Sismondi, and decried by Dante in the following words—

"Colui che più sied' alto ed ha sembianti
D' aver negletto ciò che far dovea
. . . . . che potea
Sanar le piaghe ch' hanno Italia morta,
Sì che tardi per altri si ricrea."*

---

* "He, who sits high above the rest, and seems
To have neglected that he should have done,
. . . . . who might have heal'd
The wounds whereof fair Italy hath died,
So that by others she revives but slowly."—*Purg.* vii. 94.

In the year 1278 he sent a legate into Italy, who acknowledged the supreme authority of the pope over the cities and republics in the Territories of the Church, and sold unconditional liberty to many of the states of the Peninsula that for a long time had been virtually free. He was succeeded by Adolphus of Nassau, who was deposed by Albert of Austria, both of whom remained strangers to Italy. The answer made by Pope Boniface to the ambassadors of the latter, when he requested the holy pontiff to acknowledge him as emperor, has already been related. Albert was reigning in the year 1300, in which Dante supposed his vision to take place, and is thus apostrophised by the poet for treading in the footsteps of his sire—

" O Alberto Tedesco ch' abbandoni
Costei ch' è fatta indomita e selvaggia,
E dovresti inforcar li suoi arcioni,
Giusto giudicio dalle stelle caggia
Sovra 'l tuo sangue, e sia nuovo ed aperto,
Tal che 'l tuo successor temenza n' aggia:
Ch' avete tu e 'l tuo padre sofferto,
Per cupidigia di costà distretti,
Che 'l giardin dello 'mperio sia diserto." *

In the year 1308, just eight years after the imprecation contained in the fourth line of the above passage was supposed to have been spoken, the monarch fell

* " Oh German Albert! who abandon'st her
That is grown savage and unmanageable,
When thou shouldst clasp her flanks with forked heels.
Just judgment from the stars fall on thy blood;
And be it strange and manifest to all;
Such as may strike thy successor with dread;
For that thy sire and thou have suffered thus,
Through greediness of yonder realms detain'd,
The garden of the empire to run waste."—*Purg.* vi. 98.

by the hands of an assassin. The actions of his successor, Henry VII. of Luxembourg, in some degree accorded with the views and the expectations of the Tuscan poet. In the year 1310 he made an expedition into Italy, and endeavoured to heal the wounds of the land, by curbing the violent chiefs of both factions, Ghibelline as well as Guelf. In the year 1311 he had the iron crown at Monza placed on his head; and in the following year he was crowned emperor at Rome, not without some opposition from Robert, king of Naples. His conduct was so much approved of by the poet, that he is placed by him in one of the highest seats in heaven, and eulogised in the following terms—

> "In quel gran seggio a che tu gli occhi tieni,
> Per la corona che già v' è su posta,
> . . . .
> Sederà l' alma, che fia giù agosta,
> Dell' alto Arrigo ch' a drizzare Italia
> Verrà in prima ch' ella sia disposta." *

He might possibly have realised the expectations of his friends, if, in the year after his coronation at Rome, he had not been carried off by a fever or poison at Buonconvento. The words of the annalist of Italy, "That even his Guelf opponents allow him to have

> "In that proud stall,
> On which, the crown, already o'er its state
> Suspended, holds thine eye . . .
> . . . . . shall rest the soul
> Of the great Harry, he who, by the world
> Augustus hail'd, to Italy must come,
> Before her day be ripe."
>
> *Par.* xxx. 135.

been endowed with so many virtues, and such illustrious talents, that he may be compared to the most glorious who ruled the Roman empire, and that it need not be said that, if the extraordinary ills of Italy were at that time capable of being healed, one could not have chosen a better physician," show that the eulogy of Dante was neither partial nor exaggerated. But, in the words of the same writer, death spoiled all his measures, and the malady of the Italians continued to be aggravated from that day.

In most of the republics of Italy, the spirit of discord, the commencement of which has already been noticed, led either to a state of chronic anarchy, or to despotism. Of the former, Florence affords a memorable example. The origin of the factions caused by the quarrels of the Buondelmonti and Uberti, and the banishment of the adherents of the former by Frederic II., have already been detailed. After the death of that emperor, in the year 1250, those that had been driven into exile by him were allowed to return, and efforts were made by the most patriotic of the citizens to appease all past differences. They also formed a new constitution somewhat resembling that of the other republics, in which the chief management of affairs was intrusted to a council of twelve citizens, called Anziani. When order had thus been restored among the people, and the benefit of self-government had been given to them, she increased as fast as the other free states of the peninsula. She soon rose to pre-eminence among the cities of Tuscany. The inhabitants of Pistoia, Arezzo,

Sienna, and Volterra, became her allies or her subjects. In this brief interlude of prosperity and repose, many causes conspired to give a preponderance of power to the Guelfs: the citizens of the republic were naturally inclined to look upon the church as the guardian of their liberties; most of the Ghibellines had made themselves personally disliked during the time of Frederic II.; and their aristocratic tendencies were viewed with suspicion by a people who wished above all things for self-government. The Ghibellines, with the view of regaining the ascendency they had lost, opened secret negotiations with Manfred; but, on the discovery of their intrigues by the Anziani, they were banished from the city. In their exile and their distress they renewed their application to the son of Frederic, and, by the aid of a timely reinforcement from him, they were enabled to defeat their enemies at Monte Aperto, near the river Arbia. The loss of this battle by the Guelfs has generally been ascribed to the treachery of one of their own party, Bocca degli Abati, known to every reader of Dante for his unenviable position—

> "Eran l' ombre dolenti nella ghiaccia,
> Mettendo i denti in nota di cigogna." *

The same person is supposed to be struck accidentally by the poet, and thus to address him—

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* "Blue pinch'd and shrined in ice the spirits stood,
Moving their teeth in shrill note like the stork."
Inf. xxxii. 34.

" Perchè mi peste ?
Se tu non vieni a crescer la vendetta
Di mont 'Aperti, perchè mi moleste ?" *

The Ghibellines returned to their native city, whence the whole of the opposite faction fled in dismay. All accounts concur in stating that their behaviour, in their hour of prosperity, was sufficient to justify subsequent unpopularity. Alluding thereto, Dante says—

" Lo strazio c' l grande scempio
Che fece l'Arbia colorata in rosso,
Tale orazion fa far nel nostro tempio." †

Machiavelli says that they put their native country entirely under the dominion of Manfred, abrogating all the ancient offices, and all traces of the former constitution; whence the people, who had always been ill inclined towards the Ghibellines, became their bitterest enemies, which was the cause of the subsequent ruin of the party. The victors even carried their animosity so far as to propose demolishing the walls of Florence, lest they should protect the free citizens of the republic; and they might probably have carried their iniquitous project into execution, if they had not been prevented by the patriotism of one of their own leaders, Farinata degli Uberti. The hero who thus saved his native city

* " ' Wherefore dost bruise me ?' weeping, he exclaimed.
' Unless thy errand be some fresh revenge
For Montaperto, wherefore troublest me ?' "
Inf. xxxii. 79.

† " ' The slaughter and great havoc,' I replied,
' That colour'd Arbia's flood with crimson stain—
To these impute, that in our hallowed dome
Such orisons ascend.'"
Inf. x. 83.

is placed by Dante in the regions of the damned, and made to tell his own story in the following words :—

"Ma fu' io sol colà, dove sofferto
Fu per ciascun di torre via Fiorenza,
Colui che la difesi a viso aperto." *

The Ghibellines continued to reign supreme at Florence under direction of Guido di Novello, till the defeat of Manfred raised the hopes of the opposite party. They then thought it politic to endeavour to curry favour with the people, and declared their willingness to establish a popular government. For the purpose of effecting this, Guido brought from Bologna two cavaliers of a new order, called Fratri Godenti—the one a Guelf, the other a Ghibelline—whom he made chief magistrates of the city, under the title of Podesta, and established a semblance of a constitution. The chief council of the state was formed by thirty-six citizens, chosen, without any regard to party, for their reputation for talents and virtue. The inhabitants of the city were divided into twelve companies, called Arts, distinguished by their trades or professions, of which seven were denominated the greater Arts, and five the lesser Arts. Each art had its own magistrate; and to each was assigned a separate standard, which its members were bound to follow, wherever their services might be required for their country's good. The privilege of electing their own magistrates appears at first to have

* "'But singly there I stood, when, by consent
Of all, Florence had to the ground been razed,
The one who openly forbade the deed.'"
Inf. x. 89.

been restricted to the greater Arts, but was in the course of time extended to the lesser, whose number was also increased from seven to fifteen.

The new government, however, did not give the satisfaction expected. The Podestæ, in spite of their professions of impartiality, were strongly suspected to be secret favourers and abettors of the Guelfs. For this reason Dante has assigned them a place among the hypocrites in Hell. He makes them tell their story in the following words :—

"Fratri Godenti fummo e Bolognesi,
Io Catalano, e costui Loderingo
Nomati, e da tua terra insieme presi,
Come suole esser tolto un uom solingo,
Per conservar sua pace ; e fummo tali
Ch' ancor si pare intorno dal Guardingo."*

Guido himself was ere long driven out of Florence. The prospects of the Ghibellines were further depressed by the defeat of Conradin, and the confirmation of the power of Charles of Anjou. For some time both parties were allowed to remain in the city, though that of the Guelfs was infinitely the stronger in the number of its adherents, and in popularity with the lower orders. They seem, indeed, to have possessed one great advan-

* "'Joyous friars we were,
Bologna's natives; Catalano I,
He Loderingo named; and by thy land
Together taken, as men use to take
A single and indifferent arbiter,
To reconcile their strifes. How there we sped,
Gardingo's* vicinage can best declare.'"
Inf. xxiii. 103.

* A Ghibelline chateau destroyed by their orders.

tage over their opponents, in that they readily rallied, if they did not actually acquire fresh strength, after each successive defeat. It would be difficult for any writer of prose to sum up the history of their party in language as concise or as forcible as that employed for the purpose by Dante. Farinata, the patriot Ghibelline, by whose sole counsel the buildings of the Athens of Italy were saved from destruction, is supposed thus to address the poet when alluding to his forefathers, who are well known to have been Guelfs—

"Ficramente furo avversi
A me ed a' miei primi ed a mia parte,
Sì che per due fiate li dispersi."*

To which the poet supposes himself to reply—

"S' ei fur cacciati ei tornar d' ogni parte,
. . . . l' una e l' altra fiata:
Ma i vostri non appreser ben quell' arte."†

The power and the relative number of the Guelfs was further increased by the entry into the city of Charles of Anjou, which was the cause of the departure of many of the principal Ghibellines. About the same time, also, a new constitution was established, the distinguishing feature in which was the great number of legislative councils.

* "'Fiercely were they
Adverse to me, my party, and the blood
From whence I sprang: twice, therefore, I abroad
Scattered them.'"

Inf. x. 45.

† "'Though driven out, yet they each time
From all parts,' answered I, 'returned; an art
Which yours have shown they are not skilled to learn.'"

Inf. x. 48.

It would be alike tedious and unprofitable to go through the details of party warfare, and the changes in the form of government, that took place in this city from this time till the commencement of the fresh quarrels at the end of the century. The instability of the national institutions is pithily described by Dante in the following apostrophe to his native city—

" Atene e Lacedemona che fenno
L' antiche leggi e furon sì civili,
Fecero al viver bene un picciol cenno,
Verso di te che fai tanto sottili
Provedimenti ch' a mezzo novembre
Non giunge quel che tu d' ottobre fili.
Quante volte del tempo che rimembre,
Leggi, monete, officii e costume
Hai tu mutato, e rinnovato membre?
E se ben ti ricordi, e vedi lume,
Vedrai te simigliante a quella 'nferma
Che non può trovar posa in su le piume,
Ma con dar volta suo dolore scherma."*

The uprisings and downfallings of each party varied chiefly with the politics of the popes, of whom some were the zealous friends, and others were the opponents, of the house of Anjou, and one at least was honestly anxious to put an end to the dissensions which had

* "Athens and Lacedæmon, who of old
Enacted laws, for civil arts renown'd,
Made little progress in improving life
Towards thee, who usest such nice subtlety,
That to the middle of November scarce
Reaches the thread thou in October weavest.
How many times within thy memory,
Customs, and laws, and coins, and offices
Have been by thee renew'd, and people changed.
If thou remember'st well, and canst see clear,
Thou wilt perceive thyself like a sick wretch,
Who finds no rest upon her down, but oft
Shifting her side, short respite seeks from pain."
Purg. vi. 139.

been the bane of the republic. The tendency of the variations of the constitution was chiefly in the direction of democracy. The highest authority in the state came at last to be committed to three magistrates, called Priori degli Arti, who might be of any rank, provided they were engaged in some trade. Their number was finally increased to eight; and sometimes as many as twelve were chosen. In the course of time they came to be honoured with the appellation of Signori. In the year 1298 a palace was built, in which they were to hold their deliberations, and to live at the public expense. Having found, at the beginning of their career, that they were unable to enforce obedience to the laws from the most powerful among the nobles, they chose a supreme magistrate every year, called Gonfaloniere della Giustizia, who was to be ready with one thousand armed men, to make their authority respected, whenever it should be necessary. To the great influence of these magistrates, chosen as they were from the populace, Machiavelli ascribes the final fall of the Florentine aristocracy.

About this period, also, appeared the first symptom of the jealousy between Florence and the neighbouring republic of Pisa, whence sprang the wars which, in the subsequent century, form such frequent episodes in the history of Italy. Up to the middle of the thirteenth century, Pisa had far surpassed all the other cities of Tuscany in power and wealth, and, unlike most of them, she was now attached to the cause of the Ghibellines. These two circumstances were sufficient to excite their

envy and dislike. The complete defeat of her armaments near Meloria, by the Genoese, in the year 1284, emboldened them to attack her. In the following year the Florentines formed a league against her, with the avowed purpose of demolishing her walls, and compelling her inhabitants to disperse through the country. The Pisans put themselves under the protection of Ugolino della Ghiradesca, who has been immortalised by being the subject of one of the finest cantos in the poem of Dante. Instead of his bringing his great talents and his courage to bear against the enemies of his countrymen, he purchased an ignominious peace by surrendering their fortified castles to the Lucchese, who had joined the league of the Florentines. A subsequent act of treachery so exasperated those who had voluntarily submitted themselves to him, that they shut him up in a tower, since known by the name of "Torre della fame," where he died of starvation. For this act of cruelty the Pisans are thus apostrophised by Dante—

"Ahi Pisa, vituperio delle genti
Del bel paese là dove 'l sì suona;
Poi che i vicini a te punir son lenti,
Muovansi la Capraia e la Gorgona,
E faccian siepe ad Arno in su la foce,
Sì ch' egli annieghi in te ogni persona."*

"Oh, thou Pisa! shame
Of all the people, who their dwelling make
In that fair region, where the Italian voice
Is heard; since that thy neighbours are so slack
To punish, from their deep foundations rise
Capraia and Gorgona, and dam up
The mouth of Arno; that each soul in thee
May perish in the waters."

Inf. xxxiii. 79.

About ten years later, the Pisans, under Guido di Montefeltro, completely defeated the Guelfs of Florence and Lucca.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the condition of Florence is described by all historians as being sufficiently prosperous. Even the contentions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines seemed likely to die a natural death. But it was not long before the rapid increase of prosperity destroyed all virtue. As in the Roman republic, "wealth begat luxury and avarice, together with pride;"* so at Florence the poet declared—

"La gente nuova, ed i subiti guadagni
Orgoglio e dismisura han generata."†

The same bard also thus pithily describes the grandeur of his country, and the demoralisation of his countrymen—

"Godi Firenze poi che se' sì grande
Che per mare e per terra batti l' ali,
E per lo' nferno il tuo nome si spande."‡

Events, however, soon showed that the spirit of discord, though scotched, was not extinct. An altercation having arisen at Pistoia, in the year 1296, between two members of the family of Cancellieri, the most powerful in the city, one of the contending parties lost his temper

* "Ex divitiis juventutem luxuria atque avaritia, cum superbia invasere."—*Sallustii Catalina*, 12.

† "An upstart multitude and sudden gains,
Pride and excess, oh Florence! have in thee
Engender'd." *Inf.* xvi. 73.

‡ "Florence, exult! for thou so mightily
Hast thriven, that o'er land and sea thy wings
Thou beatest, and thy name spreads over hell."
Inf. xxvi. 1.

and inflicted a blow on his adversary. The offender went on the following day to tender an apology, but the other was so incensed that he ordered his attendants to seize him and to amputate his hand. This was the cause of a feud, in which all the members of the family of Cancellieri ranged themselves on either one side or the other. One of the ancestors of that family had had two wives, one of whom was named Bianca, which circumstance gave the names of Bianchi and Neri to the parties into which his descendants were split. This feud rapidly extended itself to Florence, where a considerable rivalry already existed between two great families, the Cerchi and Donati. An accidental rencontre brought it to an issue at Florence, just as it had been originally caused at Pistoia. In their hurry to see some dancing girls on a festival day, some of the Cerchi rode up against some of the Donati, which was the cause of so much irritation that swords were drawn, and blood was shed. The principal families of Florence divided themselves into factions as readily as they had done on the occasion of the quarrels of the Buondelmonti and the Uberti. In the year 1301 a serious affray took place between the two parties; the whole city was in arms; the law, and the authority of the Signoria, among whom was the poet Dante Alighieri, was set at naught by the great men of each side, while the best citizens looked on with fear and trembling. The Donati, fearing that unaided they would not be a match for their adversaries, proposed that they should put themselves under a ruler of the

family of the king of France. Such a direct attack on the independence of the state was not to be borne by the Signoria, among whom the poet had great influence. At his instigation they armed the populace, and with their assistance compelled the heads of the contending parties to lay down their arms, and sent into exile Messer Donati and others who had proposed the calling in of foreigners. A sentence of banishment was also pronounced against the most violent men of the party of the Bianchi, most of whom, however, were allowed, under various pretences, to return to their country.

The party of the Donati in their exile carried on those intrigues which they had commenced while at home. They derived considerable assistance from the king of France's brother, Charles of Valois, whom Pope Boniface had brought into Italy. That prince managed, by means of promises, which he subsequently violated, to get admission for himself, together with several of the Neri, and the legate of the pope, into Florence. He then produced letters, generally suspected to be forgeries, charging the leaders of the Bianchi with conspiracy. The popularity of the accused party had already been on the wane, and after a violent tumult, the chief men among them, including Dante, were obliged to leave the city; their goods were confiscated, and their houses destroyed. The sufferings entailed on Florence by the treacherous conduct of the French prince are thus alluded to by the exiled poet—

"Un altro Carlo fuor di Francia:

. . . . . .

Senz' arme n' esce, e solo con la lancia
Con la qual giostrò Giuda, e quella ponta
Sì, ch' a Fiorenza fa scoppiar la pancia."*

From this time Corso Donati, the head of the faction of the Neri, became the chief man at Florence. The accounts of its state at this period, taken from the most credible historians, warrant us in thinking that the severe invectives of Dante are not to be ascribed merely to indignation or resentment at the harsh treatment he had received. The conduct of the ruling party throughout, seems to justify fully the use of the expressions *volpi*, and *lazzi sorbi;* and the subsequent fortune of the republic answers to the prophecy—

"Di sua bestialitate il suo processo
Farà la pruova, sì ch' a te fia bello
Averti fatta parte per te stesso."†

The city was rent by more violent dissensions than ever. There were now three distinct sources of contention—the jealousy between the people and the nobles, the disputes between the Bianchi and the Neri, and those between the Ghibellines and the Guelfs. It was in vain that the legate of Pope Benedict, a man of great piety, went thither for the sake of trying to

"From France invites another Charles:

. . . . . .

Unarm'd he issues, saving with that lance,
Which the arch-traitor tilted with; and that
He carries with so home a thrust, as rives
The bowels of poor Florence." *Purg.* xx. 69.

† "Their course shall so evince their brutishness,
To have ta'en thy stand apart shall well become thee."
Par. xvii. 66.

restore order. The inhabitants showed how little they respected him by exhibiting a scandalous representation of hell on the river Arno; and, after renewing his efforts without success, he cursed the city and departed.

The reign of Corso Donati ended like that of most of those who have succeeded to power by popular violence. Six years after the banishment of his adversaries he was suspected, not without reason, of endeavouring to make himself independent of constitutional restraints. The Signori declared him guilty of rebellion. After a protracted resistance he made his escape from the city, but was pursued and taken at Rovesca. When he was led captive by those among whom his authority had lately been paramount, he threw himself under his horse, and after having been dragged some distance, he was despatched by one of the captors. His end is thus alluded to by the poet, whom he had driven into exile—

"Quei che più n' ha colpa
Vegg' io a coda d' una bestia tratto
Verso la valle ove mai non si scolpa.
La bestia ad ogni passo va più ratto
Crescendo sempre, infin ch' ella 'l percuote
E lascia 'l corpo vilmente disfatto."*

The party that had been raised by Corso Donati continued to hold the chief power at Florence even after

* "'Lo! he, whose guilt is most,
Passes before my vision, dragg'd at heels
Of an infuriate beast. Toward the vale,
Where guilt hath no redemption, on it speeds,
Each step increasing swiftness on the last;
Until a blow it strikes that leaveth him
A corpse most vilely shatter'd.'"

Purg. xxiv. 82.

the death of their chief. The exiled faction, in the words of one of their leaders, already quoted, had not learned the art of returning to their country as well as their adversaries. Four years after the events alluded to, the emperor, Henry VII., made some negotiations in their favour, which but imperfectly succeeded. The Florentines, however, were awed when he approached their city at the head of his army; and in the extremity of their danger they implored the assistance of king Robert of Naples, and made him Lord of their city for the space of five years. The emperor's mysterious death at Buonconvento freed them from their alarm.

While the kingdom of the Sicilies was rent asunder by the conflicting claims of the houses of Aragon and Anjou, while Rome was distracted by the turbulence of her nobles and disgraced by the simony of her pontiffs, while Florence was rent by civil dissensions as violent as any which history has recorded, the republics in the north and north-east of Italy fell under the dominion of feudal lords or agitating demagogues, both of whom rose to the importance of hereditary sovereigns. The Italian scholar need hardly be reminded of the description given by Dante of the state of the peninsula at this period—

> "Che le terre d' Italia tutte piene
> Son di tiranni, ed un Marcel diventa
> Ogni villan che parteggiando viene."*

* "So are the Italian cities all o'erthrong'd
With tyrants, and a great Marcellus made
Of every petty factious villager."

Purg. vi. 124.

In Milan, which had taken the lead in the opposition to the house of Suabia, the ascendency of the Guelfs was for a time completely established. Among the leading families of the dominant party were the Torri, who soon became all-powerful in their native city. In the course of time the altered circumstances of Italy, and the fickleness of the populace, wrought their effects—the scattered forces of the Ghibellines were recruited, and the authority of the Torri began rapidly to diminish. As the power of the former increased, they succeeded in driving the latter into exile, and establishing their own supremacy in the city, which had once been the headquarters of the party of the church. The leading family on their side were the Visconti, whose descendants in the subsequent century acted such an important part on the stage of Italian politics. Towards the end of the thirteenth century Otho Visconti managed to transmit to his nephew, Matteo, the supremacy which he had originally established in Milan, and extended over some of the neighbouring cities. This prince increased the dominions left to him by his uncle, and strengthened his position by marrying his daughter to Alboino della Scala, the Signor of Verona, whose power was then paramount in Eastern Lombardy, and his son to the widow of Nino di Gallura, a daughter of the Marquis of Este, who had established a principality at Ferrara. This latter marriage is alluded to in the following beautiful verses by the deceased husband, whom Dante represents as meeting him in purgatory—

"Di' a Giovanna mia, che per me chiami
Là dove agli 'nnocenti si risponde.
Non credo che la sua madre più m' ami
Poscia che trasmutò le bianche bende,
Le quai convien che misera ancor brami.

. . . . .

Non le farà sì bella sepoltura
La vipera che i Milanesi accampa,
Com' avria fatto il gallo di Gallura."*

In spite of his talents, Matteo Visconti was vanquished by a league of the neighbouring lords, whom his ambition had made his enemies, and was obliged to leave Milan, to which the family of the Torri were recalled. After a short period he was permitted to return. For some time the heads of the opposite parties remained in the city, and seemed to bid against one another for the favour of the people. In this state they continued till the visit of Henry VII. to Italy, when Visconti managed to rid himself of his rivals by an ingenious artifice. On the arrival of that monarch in Milan, he endeavoured to rekindle the ancient animosity between the Germans and the Italians—instigating his countrymen to turn to ridicule the less refined manners of their visitors, and frequently suggesting to them the feasibility of taking up arms for the purpose of expelling the so-called barbarians from their city. As soon as the passions of the soldiers and the populace seemed

* "Tell my Giovanna, that for me she call
There, where reply to innocence is made.
Her mother, I believe, loves me no more;
Since she has changed the white and wimpled folds,
Which she is doomed once more with grief to wish.

. . . . . .

For her so fair a burial will not make
The viper, which calls Milan to the field,
As had been made by shrill Gallura's bird." —*Purg.* viii. 71.

to him sufficiently inflamed, a tumult was excited by the agency of some of his creatures. When the alarm of this was sufficiently spread, he betook himself, accompanied by his sons and several of his adherents, to the emperor, and brought him the intelligence that the Torri were anxious to seize his person, for the purpose of ingratiating themselves with the pope, and thereby bringing the city under their exclusive dominion. At the same time he made him the most magnanimous offers of rendering him all the assistance in his power. Henry was thoroughly deceived by this artifice; and though he had always been desirous of acting with strict impartiality towards the rival factions in Italy, on this occasion he had no hesitation in joining his forces with those of the Visconti, for the purpose of attacking their personal rivals, who were at this time busily engaged in a vain attempt to restore order in the city. The members of the family of Torri were completely taken by surprise; some of them were killed on the spot, and the remainder were driven into exile with the loss of their property. Thus was the dynasty of the Visconti established in Milan.

In the west of Lombardy, the marquises of Montferrat and the counts of Savoy continued to maintain their ancient pre-eminence in their respective districts. Susa, Turin, and Aosta became subject to the former; the latter extended their dominions over Novara, Vercelli, and Alessandria. Their power, however, soon came to be overshadowed by the rising fortunes of the Visconti.

In the north-eastern corner of Italy the influence of the old Lombard lords, which had been extinguished there as in most other parts of the peninsula, was succeeded by that of a family that had accompanied one of the emperors from Germany. The contiguity of that part of the peninsula to the last-named country, and its physical nature, rendered the exercise of feudal tyranny comparatively easy. The eye of a traveller passing from Verona to Padua may still be struck by one or two isolated hills, which seem as it were designed by nature to be meet residences for the tyrants of the surrounding plains. One of these gave birth to a person destined to become the scourge of the neighbouring country. In the words of the poet of the middle ages—

"In quella parte della terra prava
Italica che siede intra Rialto
E le fontane di Brenta e di Piava,
Si leva un colle e non surge molt' alto,
Là onde scese già una facella
Che fece alla contrada grande assalto." *

Eccelino di Romano, the person referred to by the poet, was descended from a German noble brought into Italy by Otho III. The office of Podesta of Verona had become hereditary in his family. In the wars of the second Frederic, he put himself at the head of the

"In that part
Of the depraved Italian land, which lies
Between Rialto and the fountain-springs
Of Brenta and of Piava, there doth rise,
But to no lofty eminence, a hill,
From whence erewhile a firebrand did descend,
That sorely shent the region."
Par. ix. 21.

Ghibellines in the surrounding principalities, and became a strenuous supporter of the emperor. Under the protection of so powerful an ally, he soon made himself master of Padua, where he established his headquarters, and built the dungeons, where the most revolting cruelties were inflicted on his victims. His subsequent history, the heroic resistance of the oppressed, the crusade that was formed against him at the instigation of the pope, his talents and vigorous opposition to the overwhelming number of those whom his cruelties had made his enemies, and the characteristic circumstances of his death, are detailed in the most interesting manner by the great historian of the Italian republics. In the year 1259, he was taken prisoner, and killed himself by lacerating his wounds; and in the subsequent year his brother Alberic, with all his family, was put to death.

After the fall of this house, that of Scala rose to importance at Verona, and in the course of time extended their dominions over Vicenza and Padua. Their fame has been perpetuated by the most remarkable of monuments, and the greatest of poets. Alboino della Scala, the nephew of the first prince of this family, was the great Lombard who afforded a refuge to Dante when condemned to leave everything beloved, and to experience how bitter was bread eaten in exile. Can della Scala, the younger brother of Alboino, considerably enhanced the reputation of the family. In the first canto of the *Inferno*, the future greatness of this young scion of the house is prophesied in the following verses—

"'L veltro
Verrà che la farà morir con doglia.
Questi non ciberà terra nè peltro,
Ma sapienza e amore e virtute,
E sua nazion sarà tra Feltro e Feltro." *

And in the *Paradise*, the poet, after alluding to his first patron, Alboino, puts the following prophecy in the mouth of one of his friends, whom he meets in the regions of the blest—

"Con lui vedrai colui, che impresso fue
Nascendo, sì da questa stella forte,
Che notabili fien l' opere sue.

. . . .

Le sue magnificenze conosciute
Saranno ancora sì, che i suoi nimici
Non ne potran tener le lingue mute." †

The arrival of the great Harry of Luxembourg in Italy infused a spirit of activity into the Ghibellines, and excited the ambition of the young lord of Verona. Full scope was given to his talents, at the same time, by

* "Until that greyhound come, who shall destroy
Her with sharp pain. He will not life-support
By earth nor its base metals, but by love,
Wisdom, and virtue; and his land shall be
The land 'twixt either Feltro."
Inf. i. 98.

† M. Sismondi has given us, from a contemporary historian, a passage descriptive of the splendour of his court, which shows that the praises contained in the last stanza are no exaggeration of the poet's—

"With him shalt thou see
That mortal, who was at his birth imprest
So strongly from this star, that of his deeds
The nations shall take note. . .
. . . . . .
His bounty shall be spread abroad so widely,
As not to let the tongues, e'en of his foes,
Be idle in its praise."
Par. xvii. 75.

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the death of his elder brother, Alboino, which left him in the undivided enjoyment of the sovereignty. In the year 1312, he made himself master of Vicenza, which had revolted from the Paduans. Two years afterwards he gained a complete victory over the latter, who then made a treacherous attempt to regain some of their former possessions. Dante alludes to this achievement of his patron in the following stanza—

"Ma tosto fia, che Padova al Palude
Cangerà l' acqua* che Vincenza bagna,
Per esser al dover le genti crude." †

This battle led finally to the subjugation of the Paduans. Can Grande shortly afterwards added to his dominions the town of Trevigi, situated at the junction of the Sila and the Cagna, and then conquered Feltro, under pretence of avenging the murder of some Ferrarese who, trusting to the false promises of its bishop, had taken refuge in the city. The two events are thus alluded to by Dante—

"E dove Sile e Cagnan s' accompagna,
Tal signoreggia e va con la testa alta,
Che già per lui carpir si fa la ragna.
Piangerà Feltro ancora la diffalta

* Perhaps the expression *cangerà l' acqua*, which would appear to imply a great slaughter having taken place, may not be strictly correct as applied to this battle, as M. Sismondi informs us that it was chiefly remarkable as being among the first of those bloody engagements which were afterwards so common in Italy, and of which we have some very remarkable specimens in Sforza's campaigns. In this battle of Vicenza, it is said that only six gentlemen and forty common soldiers were left dead on the field.

† "The hour is near
When, for their stubbornness, at Padua's marsh
The water shall be changed, that laves Vicenza."
Par. ix. 46.

Dell' empio suo pastor, che sarà sconcia
Sì che per simil non s' entrò in Malta.
Troppo sarebbe larga la bigoncia
Che ricevesse 'l sangue Ferrarese." *

This renowned prince died just nine years after the bard, who has secured to him a fame which will last as long as the syren Tuscan tongue continues to be read. The eulogies of the poet are amply justified by the concurrent testimonies of the best historians of Italy.

Among the petty sovereigns in the third group of cities south of the Po, the family of Este began to acquire considerable power in Ferrara and its vicinity. The above-mentioned city had been assigned to them by one of the popes, who was anxious to preserve it from Eccelino di Romano. At the beginning of the fourteenth century they were deprived of their dominions by the pope and the Venetians; but in the year 1317 they were recalled by the united wishes of their subjects. Ravenna fell under the dominion of Guido Novello di Polenta, who has acquired some fame as having been the friend and patron of Dante, and the father of Francesca di Polenta, whose misfortunes are the subject of the beautiful episode in the fifth canto of the *Inferno*. Fortunately for his memory, his medallion, along with that of Can Grande of Verona, has been engraved on

* "And where Cagnano meets with Silo, one
Lords it, and bears his head aloft, for whom
The web is now a-warping. Feltro too
Shall sorrow for its godless shepherd's fault,
Of so deep stain, that never, for the like,
Was Malta's bar unclosed. Too large should be
The skillet that would hold Ferrara's blood."
Par. ix. 48.

the cupola, "more neat than solemn," which protects the dust of the poet. Forli, after having been subject to Guido di Montefeltro, another friend of the Tuscan bard, who acquired considerable renown by a victory gained over the French, fell under the dominion of a noble Venetian family of the name of Ordelaffi, distinguished by their crest of a green lion. Rimini was tyrannised over by Malatesta of Verruchio; and Faenza and Imola, situated on the rivers Lamone and Santerno, were ruled over by one Machinardo, who had for his crest a lion on white ground, and was noted for his tergiversations. The state of this group of republics, at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries, has acquired a greater degree of fame than that to which it might otherwise have been entitled, from having been thus pithily described in the twenty-seventh canto of the *Inferno*—

"Romagna tua non è, e non fu mai
Senza guerra ne' cuor de' suoi tiranni;
Ma palese nessuna or ven lasciai.
Ravenna sta com' è stata molt' anni;
L' aquila da Polenta la si cova,
Sì che Cervia ricuopre co' suoi vanni.
La terra che fe' già la lunga prova,
E di Franceschi sanguinoso mucchio,
Sotto le branche verdi si ritrova:
E 'l mastin vecchio e 'l nuovo da Verrucchio,
Che fecer di Montagna il mal governo,
Là dove soglion fan de' dente succhio.
La città di Lamone e di Santerno
Conduce il leoncel dal nido bianco,
Che muta parte dalla state al verno." *

* "Never was thy Romagna without war
In her proud tyrant's bosom, nor is now:
But open war there left I none. The state,

The remaining stanza of this passage is remarkable, as containing a pithy description of the state of many Italian cities of that age besides that of Casena, on the river Savio, to which the poet therein alludes—

"E quella a cui il Savio bagna il fianco,
Così com' ella sie' tra 'l piano e 'l monte,
Tra tirannia si vive e stato franco." *

The coincidence between this passage, written by a contemporary poet, and an observation made five centuries later by the great historian of the Italian republics, is remarkable. M. Sismondi, when speaking of the cities of central Lombardy, says—"Governed with an iron hand by their ephemeral lords, who could only inspire them with horror or contempt, they beheld their territories an incessant prey to civil war. There are few instances of a ruler of a town whose government was not overthrown before it had been ten years in existence, and each revolution was preceded by a combat which cost a

Ravenna hath maintain'd this many a year,
Is steadfast. There Polenta's eagle broods;
And in his broad circumference of plume
O'ershadows Cervia. The green talons grasp
The land, that stood erewhile the proof so long,
And piled in bloody heap the host of France.
The old mastiff of Verruchio and the young,
That tore Montagna in their wrath, still make,
Where they are wont, an augre of their fangs.
Lamone's city, and Santerno's, range
Under the lion of the snowy lair,
Inconstant partisan, that changeth sides,
Or ever summer yields to winter's frost."
Inf. xxvii. 37.

* "And she, whose flank is washed of Savio's wave,
As 'twixt the level and the steep she lies,
Lives so 'twixt tyrant power and liberty."
Inf. xxvii. 50.

great number of citizens their lives, and accompanied by the exile and ruin of the whole of one party, whose goods were confiscated, and whose houses were levelled." And the same historian, in referring to the dynasties that were established at this time, says—"Thirty years later we shall see appear in most of them a set of voluptuous and pusillanimous tyrants, in the place of the warriors who had established their foundations."

While the other cities of Lombardy and Romagna were gradually falling under the dominion of tyrants, Venice formed a constitution which still attracts the attention of mankind. To the circumstance of her inhabitants being so occupied in mercantile pursuits that there were no idle gentlemen among them, and to her peculiar maritime situation, which rendered them independent of the annoyances that might be inflicted on them by the lords of the contiguous castles and land, Machiavelli* ascribes her preservation of her liberty. For some time her doges appear to have exercised a power at least as unlimited as that which was said to have been enjoyed by the early Roman kings. Their election was originally intrusted to a council of four hundred and fifty or four hundred and sixty, nominated by twelve citizens, who were chosen two from each of the six regions into which the republic was divided. In the course of time, this council became so aristocratic as to give offence to the populace, who, in the year 1289, made an attempt to elect a doge of their own. But the person whom they chose as their representative was

* *Discorsi*, lib. i. cap. 55.

so offended with their violence that he decamped; and the consequent failure of this attempt only strengthened the influence of the nobility. In the year 1297, the power of the latter had become so great that they actually declared the grand council hereditary in the families of those of whom it was then composed. All the vacancies that occurred by the occasional extinction of families, they filled up by the admission of others which had become too powerful to be excluded. After a time, however, the number of this council was declared unlimited, so that the heads of great houses might at any time be placed therein. The doge was assisted in the discharge of his duties by what was called "*the* grand council," composed of sixty members, chosen each year, and six other councillors, renewed every eight months, who, along with himself, composed what was called the Signoria. In 1311 was created another council, which, though denominated the Council of Ten, consisted of sixteen members, who acted as a species of state inquisitors, and acquired a fearful notoriety in subsequent years.

The end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century may be reckoned the most glorious in the annals of Genoa. A naval war which she was waging with Pisa terminated in the total defeat of the latter, near Meloria, in 1282. She then disputed with the Venetians the supremacy of the Ægean and Ionian seas, and gained a complete victory over them, near Corcyra, in the year 1297. She preserved her republican constitution intact in spite of the many

attempts made against her by the Ligurian nobles, whom the nature of the country allowed to do her much harm, till the year 1312, when she made a partial surrender of her liberties to purchase the protection of the Emperor Henry VII. against these turbulent neighbours. This is the first instance of her adopting a policy which she so frequently followed on subsequent occasions. Nevertheless she submitted with very bad grace to all the exactions demanded by the emperor.

CHAPTER IV.

EXPEDITION OF THE EMPEROR LOUIS INTO ITALY—OF JOHN, KING OF BOHEMIA—OF CHARLES IV.—DEPOSITION OF WENCESLAUS.—DEFEAT OF ROBERT OF BAVARIA.—RISE OF THE POWER OF THE VISCONTI IN LOMBARDY, AND DECLINE OF THAT OF THE SCALIGERI.—TOTAL EXTINCTION OF THE LATTER—AS ALSO OF THE HOUSE OF CARRARA AT PADUA.—CONQUESTS AND DEATH OF GIAN GALEAZZO VISCONTI.—ROMAN PONTIFFS AT AVIGNON.—RIENZI.—RETURN OF THE POPES TO ROME.—GREAT SCHISM.——ELECTION OF MARTIN IV.—GREATNESS AND AMBITION OF KING ROBERT OF NAPLES.—QUEEN JOAN—MURDER OF ANDREW HER FIRST HUSBAND.—QUEEN JOAN EXPELLED FROM HER NEAPOLITAN DOMINIONS—BUT IS AFTERWARDS ALLOWED TO RETURN—IS KILLED, AND SUCCEEDED BY CHARLES OF DURAZZO—WHOSE SUCCESSION IS DISPUTED BY LOUIS OF ANJOU.—LADISLAUS, KING OF NAPLES.—AFFAIRS OF TUSCANY.—GHIBELLINE PARTY HEADED BY UGUCCIONE DELLA FAGGIOLA AT PISA, AND BY CASTRUCCIO CASTRACANI AT LUCCA.—VARIOUS CHANGES IN THE CONSTITUTION OF FLORENCE.—WALTER, DUKE OF ATHENS—HIS EXPULSION.—TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF THE POWER OF THE NOBILITY.—REFLECTIONS OF MACHIAVELLI.—JEALOUSY OF THE RICCI AND ALBIZZI.—FIRST MENTION OF THE MEDICI.—INSURRECTION OF THE LOWER ORDERS OF THE POPULACE.—FINAL ESTABLISHMENT OF THE POWER OF THE ALBIZZI.—ESTABLISHMENT OF A BALIA.—AFFAIRS OF PISA AND LUCCA.—PISA FINALLY CONQUERED BY THE FLORENTINES.—NAVAL WARS OF VENICE AND GENOA.—INTERNAL REVOLUTIONS OF THE LATTER.—REPUBLICS OF ROMAGNA.

THE history of the generation who were the contemporaries of Dante has been detailed at greater length than might seem requisite in an introductory sketch, because it seemed difficult to describe the state into which Italy then fell in language more appropriate than that of the poet. This state continued with slight modification during the whole of the fourteenth century. The petty tyrants of the cities, whose rise has been related, hesi-

tated not to commit crimes of the most flagrant nature; "a gross debauchery prevailed in the interior of their palaces, and poison and assassination were every day employed in defence of their government." * The old party appellations of Guelfs and Ghibellines still continued; "men fought, because their fathers had fought before—or because they had offences or blood to wipe out." † These names were often given to those who opposed or supported the ambitious designs of individuals. In the beginning of the century the king of Naples tried to reorganise the party that called itself Guelf, for the purpose of attaining supreme power in the peninsula; subsequently the house of Scala, and after them the Visconti, endeavoured, in the same manner, to aggrandise themselves by means of those who still called themselves Ghibellines. In Tuscany, the Guelfs were represented by the Florentines, the Ghibellines by the Lucchese and the Pisans. During the whole of this century, the two latter maintained their independence against the former as perseveringly as ever Ægina or Megara sustained theirs against the Athenian republic. In the city of Florence itself, the spirit of discord which had been kindled by the dissensions of the Buondelmonti and Uberti, and reappeared on various occasions, now manifested itself in the contentions of the lowest of the populace and the citizen aristocracy. The corruption that was the fruit of early liberty and precocious prosperity continued throughout the length and breadth of the land. The nation had

* M. Sismondi, *Républiques Italiennes.* † *Ibid.*

arrived at a state from which recovery was impossible. The *vis medicatrix* of morality was extinguished. Public virtue was gone, not to return till some national convulsion or revolution might give birth to a new people. The contemporaries of Dante, worse than their fathers, produced degenerated sons, who, in their turn, brought into the world a progeny more vicious than themselves.

The premature death of Henry VII. frustrated the expectations of those who had hoped that the wounds of Italy might be healed by the intervention of the emperors. His successors were deficient in the virtues and the talents necessary to secure the respect or enforce the obedience of a remote dependency. Thirteen years after his decease, his would-be successor, Louis of Bavaria, made an expedition into Italy. As the Ghibellines had at this time acquired considerable power through the talents of Castruccio Castracani, the Signor of Lucca, and as the memory of the last emperor's virtues still lived, he found a considerable party favourably disposed towards him. But neither the prestige in favour of the successor of Henry, nor all the talents of the Signor of Lucca, were adequate to counteract the injury which the display of his character inflicted on the cause of imperial authority. Though the Ghibelline Signors of Lombardy had invited him into Italy, and assisted him with money and troops, the first use he made of the power acquired in this manner was to arrest and pillage Galeazzo Visconti, who had received him with the greatest hospitality at Milan. He then

offered to resell him his sovereignty, though he had deprived him of the means of purchasing it. As soon as he entered into Tuscany, the Pisans sent to tender him 60,000 florins as a commutation for their services. The ambassador who had arrived with this offer was seized and threatened with torture, if his countrymen did not implicitly obey the commands of the emperor. After he had been crowned at Rome, the Signor of Viterbo, who had been the first to admit him into a fortress in the States of the Church, was arrested and tortured, that he might be forced to give up his treasure. Castruccio Castracani died in the year 1327, whereon Louis deposed his children from their inheritance, which he then offered for sale. In the following year he departed from Italy, having by his tyranny more than undone all that had been effected by the virtue of his predecessor for the revival of the authority of the Cæsars.

Nor was the son of Henry VII., John king of Bohemia, more successful in establishing his power in Italy. Though he possessed all the personal advantages, he was deficient in the talents and virtues which had distinguished his father. He had acquired the accomplishments of the age, by frequently residing at Luxembourg and Paris; and the Italians were so charmed by his manner and address that they hoped to see him accomplish the good work that had been begun by his sire. Though he never attained the dignity of emperor, they invited him to settle the affairs of their country. Such an opportunity of connecting

himself with the land that has been called the garden of Europe, was eagerly seized by one to whom a residence in his own kingdom of Bohemia seemed an intolerable barbarism. Many of the cities of the peninsula put themselves under his protection, and in some places even the signors resigned in his favour. As long as all went well with him, his popularity was unbounded. But the inconstancy of his character was made manifest on the first symptom of difficulty. The Florentines were alarmed at his progress, and formed a league to oppose him. After some manœuvres and menaces, he sold the sovereignty of several of the cities that had put themselves under his protection, and departed for France, sufficiently disabused of his magnificent expectations of erecting for himself another kingdom in the south.

In the year 1346, the son of John of Bohemia succeeded Louis of Bavaria in the empire, under the title of Charles IV. But, to make use of the words of M. Sismondi, the descendants of Henry of Luxemburg seemed in each generation to lose sŏmething of his talents and virtues, so as at last to become perfect nonentities. Charles possessed neither the great qualities of Henry nor the chivalry of John. He made two expeditions into Italy, in both of which he showed himself more covetous of gold than ambitious of honour. In the first of these, which was undertaken in the year 1355, he negotiated a peace between the Milanese and the Florentines, and accepted from the latter one hundred thousand florins, on the condition that he should not enter their territory. He endeavoured to

excite the inhabitants of Pisa and Sienna to revolt, that he might overthrow their established governments, and put them under the rule of his brother; but, after a course of intrigue and a series of cruelties, he was obliged to evacuate the cities he had designed to enslave. Thirteen years afterwards he entered Italy at the head of a formidable army, for the avowed purpose of humbling the power of the Visconti. But Bernabos Visconti, the reigning member of the family, well knowing the character of the man with whom he had to deal, induced him, by means of a considerable bribe, to relinquish his purpose. On this occasion he again repaired to Tuscany, and established his headquarters at Lucca, where he had frequently resided during the life of his father. In this city he remained till his perfidy so alienated his friends, and exasperated his enemies, that he was obliged to depart in disgrace. His successor, Wenceslaus, was remarkable only for his debauchery. In the year 1395 he provoked the indignation of his countrymen by granting to Giah Galeazzo Visconti a diploma, conferring on him the titles of Count of Pavia and Duke of Milah, and was deposed in consequence. His successor, Robert of Bavaria, came to the assistance of the free republics of Italy, who had formed a league to resist the encroachments of Gian Galeazzo, and was obliged to retire with loss.

The decline of the power of the emperors in no small degree increased that of the lords of Lombardy. The signors of Milan and Verona, being no longer supported or restrained by imperial authority, did not hesitate to

exercise a complete despotism in their own dominions. Matteo Visconti had five sons — Galeazzo, Mark, Luchino, Stephen, and Gian. The eldest of these, who succeeded him, though not deficient in ability, was unfortunate in his reign; but his son Azzo, who became signor of Milan in 1328, was possessed of the talents and ambition, and crowned by the success, of his grandfather. In Verona, Mastino della Scala succeeded Dante's patron, Can Grande, in 1429; and though not endowed with all his noble qualities, he was more ambitious and less scrupulous. He boasted openly that he would ere long be king of Lombardy, and is said even to have aspired to the imperial crown. His neighbours soon began to tremble for their independence; and the signors of Mantua, Ferrara, and Padua, which, shortly after the death of Can Grande, had relapsed to its former possessors, the family of Carrara, formed a coalition with the Florentines and Venetians against him. This war is remarkable as being the first occasion on which the Venetians quitted their native element, and began to interfere in the affairs of the land, which they had hitherto only beheld from the towers of St Mark. Azzo Visconti remained a passive spectator of the contest, well knowing that nothing would strengthen him so much as the allowing his neighbours to weaken themselves by their mutual dissensions. The resources of Mastino were so exhausted in this struggle that the signors of Milan were from henceforward left without a rival in Lombardy. Their power was further increased by an unsuccessful attempt

on the part of Lodrisio Visconti, a relative of Azzo's, to make himself master of Milan, which afforded to the latter a pretext to take his kinsman's possessions of Bergamo and Brescia.

Azzo, dying without issue in the year 1339, was succeeded by his uncles, Luchino and Gian, during whose reign the good fortune of the family continued. Their influence soon became completely paramount in Lombardy and Piedmont: the counts of Savoy and Saluzzo, and the marquises of Montferrat and Ferrara, though their rights were more ancient, and apparently better founded, could do nothing without them; the important towns of Lodi, Piacenza, and Bologna, were conquered or purchased by them, and they were supposed even to entertain designs against Florence. Their rapidly-increasing power so alarmed the other potentates of the peninsula that they formed a coalition against Gian, the last surviving one of the brothers, just before his death; but his nephews and successors, Galeazzo and Bernabos, managed to maintain their position.

Though these two brothers were remarkable for astuteness and cunning, they were deficient in many of the good qualities which had distinguished their predecessors. From this time, indeed, a change seems to have come over the character of the family. In the words of an Italian historian,* "whoever would compare Galeazzo and Bernabos with their predecessors, might fancy he was comparing Tiberius or Caligula with

* Denina, *Revoluzioni d' Italia.*

Julius Cæsar or Augustus, or Domitian with Vespasian." In their reign began the system of tyranny which was carried to such extremities by their successors, and they are not without suspicion of having resorted to foul means to free themselves of their brother Matteo. On the death of Galeazzo in 1377, it was generally suspected that Bernabos was anxious to get rid of his brother's son and successor, Gian Galeazzo, to secure the whole heritage of the Visconti for his own children; but Gian Galeazzo managed, by an affectation of piety and indifference to the affairs of the world, to disarm the jealousy of his uncle. After he had continued for some time to play the hypocrite's part, he started on May 4, 1385, attended by a numerous escort, for the avowed purpose of going on a pilgrimage to the church of the Holy Virgin at Varese. As he declined passing through Milan, Bernabos and his sons went forth from the city without any attendants to do honour to their kinsman, and as soon as they had come among his retinue, they were seized and cast into prison. As their tyranny had made them exceedingly unpopular at Milan, Gian Galeazzo, who up to the present time was supposed to be endowed with all the virtues of a saint, found no difficulty in securing the allegiance of their subjects; and thus he managed to unite in his own person the extensive dominions that had been augmented by the successive generations of the Visconti. And it was not long before he himself began to follow up their career of aggrandisement and ambition.

His first attempt was against the cities of Verona

and Vicenza, which were then ruled by Antonio, the grandson of Mastino della Scala. It has already been related that the resources of the latter had been considerably crippled by the coalition which his ambition had raised against him; and they were in no way recruited by his three sons, who succeeded him as co-heirs. Thus the power of this family had continued to decline, while that of the Visconti had progressively increased. Gian Galeazzo soon found an excuse for interfering in a war which Antonio della Scala was carrying on with Francesco Carrara, the signor of Padua. Under pretext of assisting the latter, he overran and appropriated to himself the dominions of the former; and though an abortive attempt was some time afterwards made to place the son of Antonio on the throne of his ancestors, the Scaligeri may be said from this time to have ceased to rank among the sovereigns of Italy. The circumstance of the signor of Milan having reserved for himself nearly all the dominions of their conquered foe, drew forth a strong remonstrance from the signor of Padua, and was eventually the cause of a quarrel between him and his former ally. Fortune did not deal more kindly with him than she had done with his neighbour at Verona. Gian Galeazzo having, with the assistance of the Venetians, stripped him of his dominions, detained him a prisoner for the remainder of his life. His son Francesco, surnamed Novello, to distinguish him from his father, had received from the conqueror a small fief near Asti; but he, thinking this but a poor recompense for the domi-

nions of his ancestors, went through Italy, and afterwards to Germany, representing to the different states the dangers with which they were threatened by the ambition of Visconti. By this means he managed to raise against him a formidable coalition, which was joined by Robert, duke of Bavaria. But the withdrawal of the latter into Germany, at a most critical juncture, disconcerted all the plans of the allies ; and, after two years' disastrous fighting, they were glad to come to terms with their powerful countryman. Galeazzo then steadily pursued his career of aggrandisement, and managed, by diplomacy or by bribery, to acquire considerable influence in many of the cities that had hitherto been independent. In 1395 the Emperor Wenceslaus erected into a duchy the city of Milan, together with its diocese ; and in the following year he issued a new diploma, uniting to the duchy the extensive territories that were then subject to Galeazzo, with the exception of Pavia, which was made into a countship. It is worthy of observation, that the towns which were attached to the imperial duchy were very nearly the identical ones which, about two centuries before, had formed the celebrated league against Frederic I.

Galeazzo's progress was in some degree arrested by a war which shortly afterwards broke out between him and the Florentines, and by a defeat which he sustained at their hands, in the vicinity of Mantua. Nevertheless he managed, in the following years, to acquire dominion over several cities of importance,

between Florence and Rome. The deposition of Wenceslaus, and the accession of Duke Robert of Bavaria to the imperial throne, caused the formation of a second coalition against him, which was, however, to a great extent dissolved by the complete defeat of the imperial forces near Brescia. By the commencement of the fifteenth century the important towns of Genoa, Perugia, Sienna, Pisa, Lucca, and Bologna, had submitted to him, and he was in a fair way to add Florence to his conquests—and, indeed, to become sovereign of the whole of the peninsula—when he was carried off by the plague, in the vicinity of Bologna, in the year 1402.

After his death the surviving representatives of the Carrara and Scaligeri made an ineffectual attempt to regain the dominions of their families. But in this they were soon opposed by the Venetians, who thought that they should not lose this opportunity of appropriating these provinces to themselves. William, the son of Antonio della Scala, managed, by the assistance of Francesco Novello, to regain Verona, but was a few days afterwards carried off either by dysentery or poison. His two sons were immediately put in possession of the town, but they were afterwards seized by Francesco Novello, who discovered some intrigues that they were carrying on against him. The talents of Francesco soon awoke the jealousy of the Venetians, who began to excite his neighbours and his subjects against him. He himself did not hesitate to go to war with them in consequence, but he found himself no match for the powerful republic of St Mark; and

after a heroic struggle of two years, he went to Venice to throw himself at the mercy of the senate. The Council of Ten condemned him to death; and his two sons, who a short time before had been taken prisoners, shared the same fate. The senate afterwards, to their shame be it related, set a price on the heads of the two sons of William della Scala, because they had asked to be reinstated in the heritage of their fathers; and after their flight, the Venetians remained masters of all the territory between the Adriatic and Lake Garda.

In Mantua, Can Grande had made one Louis Gonzaga signor in place of Passerino dei Bonacossi, the head of the ruling family at that place, who had opposed himself to his encroachments. After the death of his great ally, Louis began to act a more independent part than he had done during his life. His descendants managed to preserve their dominions among a succession of ambitious neighbours, and occasionally held a conspicuous position among the second-rate potentates of the peninsula.

After the departure of Clement V. from Rome, the pontiffs continued to reside at Avignon, where the luxury of their court, and their open immorality, gave no small offence to all serious-minded Christians. Their principal object in Italy seems to have been to curb the ambition of the Visconti, with whom, from the year 1317 till near the end of the century, they were generally at war. Their authority was little respected either at Rome or in the other cities of their dominions; the former was reduced to a sad state of disorder by

the dissensions of the nobles; and in the latter, the feudatory lords began to affect independence. But in the year 1347 a revolution occurred at the eternal city, which attracted their attention as well as that of many sovereigns of Europe. One Cola di Rienzi, a scholar of no inconsiderable talent, undertook to restore the old Roman republic. At first his success was far greater than that which usually attends such chimerical projects. He established a free constitution, at the head of which he put himself, under the title of Tribune; he reformed several abuses which had grown up in the state during half a century of anarchy; he cleared the surrounding country of robbers; he repressed the turbulence of the nobles, and secured the impartial administration of justice for the people. But the Romans were at this time incapable of self-government, and were more fit to be ruled by a politician of the school of Machiavelli than by an enthusiast whose mind was full of the noblest examples of antiquity. The populace, as usual, found that the new constitution had failed to realise all their extravagant expectations; the nobles were eagerly watching an opportunity to get rid of a man whom they both hated and feared; and it was not long before both parties united against him and forced him to quit the city. The king of Hungary, to whom he fled for protection, willing to gratify the pope, sent him a prisoner to Avignon, where Clement VI. detained him; but in the year 1452, his successor, Innocent VI., thinking that Rome would be better under him than under those who had taken his place, sent him

back to the eternal city. An attempt to impose an import duty on wine caused an insurrection against him, in which he was killed while attempting to make his escape in disguise.

After the death of Rienzi, the pope's legate continued to reside in Rome, and did much to curb the ambition of the Visconti, and to re-establish the authority of his master in Romagna. In 1362, Innocent VI. was succeeded by Urban V. The disorders in France, consequent on the invasion of Edward III. of England, made Avignon as insecure a residence for him as Rome had been for his predecessors at the beginning of the century; and in the year 1367 he went to the eternal city. Three years afterwards he returned to Avignon, where he died shortly after his arrival. His successor, Gregory XI., at first took up his quarters at Rome, where he did much to reform the abuses of the clergy, and regain for the church its lawful dominions; but he likewise ended his days in France.

The Romans were now determined that their future pontiffs should permanently reside among them. When the cardinals met in the Vatican to elect the successor of Gregory, a tumultuous mob assembled around, and endeavoured to overawe them to choose an Italian. The majority of the assembled conclave were French, and naturally wished to confer the pontifical dignity upon one of their countrymen; but, being in some degree terrified by the pressure from without, they sought to appease the Romans, and, at the same time, to carry out their own wishes, by electing the archbishop

of Bari, who, though an Italian by birth, and a Neapolitan subject, was nevertheless of a French family, and, from having long resided in that country, might be supposed to be imbued with its nationality. The new pontiff took the title of Urban VI. From his excellent character the Romans readily submitted to him; but his uncompromising attempts to restore discipline and morality in the church brought upon him the enmity of the cardinals, who had thought they had chosen a head who would be indulgent to all their vices; and he astonished the queen of Naples, who probably expected to find him an obedient subject, by openly asserting the claims of the Holy See to dispose of her dominions. The discontented cardinals, backed by the queen, declared his election null and void, and chose in his place a Genevese, under the title of Clement VII. Such was the beginning of the famous schism which divided all the churches of Christendom.

For a time each party continued to elect a successor after the death of its own pope. In 1389, Urban VI. was succeeded by another Italian, under the title of Boniface IX.; and five years afterwards Clement VII. was succeeded by a Frenchman, who took the name of Benedict XIII. At the death of Clement, the reasonable men of all parties tried to put an end to the schism; and, on the failure of their attempts, the French, who had hitherto supported their own countrymen, declared their church independent of the bishop of Rome—a measure which Voltaire thinks so reasonable that he wonders it was not adopted by all

other churches of Europe. Boniface was followed by Innocent VII. and Gregory XII.

In the twenty-eighth year after the beginning of the schism, the clergy made another laudable attempt to terminate it, and used their utmost endeavours to persuade the rival popes to resign. Experience, however, soon showed them that they could not trust to the promises of either, and in the year 1409 they convened a council at Pisa, in which they deposed them both, and created the archbishop of Milan pope, under the title of Alexander V. He was succeeded by John XXIII., a man whose character, though probably not as black as it was painted, was not such as to command respect for the church ;* and the clergy, alarmed at the scandal that was caused thereby, called a council at Constance, which, after some difficulty, compelled him to resign. Benedict XIII., one of the rival popes who had been deposed by the council of Pisa, vainly solicited the assembled clergy to acknowledge his pretensions ; the Holy See was allowed to remain vacant for some time, while the council occupied themselves in endeavouring to investigate the ecclesiastical abuses to which the reformers of England and Bohemia had directed public attention. After an interregnum of two years the pontificate was conferred on one of the family of Colonna, who took the title of Martin V. And

* "Quant à ses mœurs, elles furent sans doute relâchées, comme celles de toute sa cour, mais il n'est pas facile de croire qu'à Bologne seulement il ait eu deux cents maitresses ainsi que l'assure Theodric de Niem, ou qu'il ait seduit, comme le portait un des articles de l'accusation intentée contre lui, trois cent religieuses."—SISMONDI, *Rep. It.*

though Benedict did not resign his pretensions, and though after his death his party continued to nominate his successors, the schism may be said to have been terminated, as far, at least, as Italian history is concerned, by this election.

In Naples, Robert, the son and successor of Charles II., did much to regain the influence that his grandfather had enjoyed in the peninsula. Like him he sought to make himself virtually the chief man in Italy, and, if possible, to acquire the title of king; and with this view he spared no pains to reorganise the Guelf party, of which he considered himself the head. It has already been mentioned that he made considerable opposition to the coronation of Henry VII., and that the Florentines, terrified at the approach of that monarch, created him temporary signor of their city. The mysterious death of Henry in 1313 seemed to open a freer scope to his ambition. The Florentines continued to court his alliance and protection; the Genoese, in the year 1318, made him signor of their city; and Pope John XXII., who had succeeded Clement V., was among the staunchest of his friends. It was said, indeed, by some, that the pontiff and the king of Naples had made an arrangement to divide Italy between them, by which, if it were once carried out, it was evident that the virtual sovereignty of the whole peninsula must have devolved on the latter. So great was his power at one time, that for ten or fifteen years, says an Italian historian,* no sovereign in Europe, not

* Denina, *Revoluzioni d' Italia.*

even excepting the king of France, was to be compared to him. The appointment of his son to the dictatorship of Florence, in 1326, seemed likely to assist him in carrying out his ambitious designs.

In the mean time the Ghibellines organised a formidable opposition against him in different parts of Italy. In Tuscany they were headed by Uguccione della Faggiola at Pisa, and afterwards by Castruccio Castracani of Lucca, both of whom defeated the armies that he had sent to co-operate with the Florentine Guelfs. Many of the great families who had been expelled from Genoa endeavoured, with the assistance of the Visconti and other Ghibelline chieftains, to drive his party from that city. This was the cause of Genoa sustaining two sieges, the last of which, on account of its duration, and the skill and earnestness displayed by both parties, has been compared by many Italian writers to the siege of Troy. Though the Guelfs came off victorious, the defence of the city in no small degree exhausted the strength, and crippled the future operations, of the king of Naples; and many blamed him for having expended therein the resources which, in their opinion, ought to have been devoted to the conquest of Sicily.

The death of Robert's only son, the duke of Calabria, just two years after he had been made dictator at Florence, weakened his position and depressed his spirits. The duke had left no issue but daughters, and Robert, anxious to secure the succession of Joan, the eldest of these, against the claims of the descendants of his elder brother, arranged a marriage between her and

Andrew, the second son of Charles Hubert of Hungary, and grandson of Charles Martel. The wedding took place when Joan was yet young; but she, inheriting as she did the constitutional disposition, and accustomed as she was to the manners of the Italians and Provençals, at that time far the most refined nations in Europe, could not bear the rustic mien and manners of her Hungarian bridegroom; and it required all the influence and authority of her father to prevent her dislike to him leading to serious disorders during his life. After Robert's death in 1342, Andrew, as he had some claims upon the kingdom independent of his wife, desired to be crowned along with her; but she wished to arrogate to herself undivided authority in the dominions of her grandfather; and the Neapolitans, who disliked Andrew's Hungarian ministers as much as the queen did his manners, sided with her. These differences terminated in the murder of Andrew at Aversa, where his body was thrown from the balcony of the house in which he was residing, to the garden beneath. Joan, whether justly or not, was generally supposed to have been accessory to this deed of violence; and men's suspicions were increased by her immediate marriage with Louis, prince of Tarento, who is said to have been her lover during the life of her husband. Louis, king of Hungary, determined to avenge the death of his brother, invaded the south of Italy with a considerable army, whereon the queen retired to her French dominions. One of the first acts of the Hungarians was to put to death, as being accessory to the murder of Andrew,

Charles, duke of Durazzo, who from being son of a brother of King Robert's, and married to a sister of the queen's, might claim to be her heir-presumptive. After a time, it was settled by the mediation of the pope, that, if Joan could acquit herself of all participation in the murder of her husband, the kingdom of Naples was to be restored to her. This she managed to do; and Louis, though he was in military occupation of the south of Italy, withdrew his forces and retired to Hungary. Joan then retained undisputed possession of the Neapolitan provinces for thirty years. Having no surviving children by four marriages, she had declared Louis of Anjou, brother of the king of France, her heir. This roused the indignation of her sister's son, Charles of Durazzo, who, under pretence of carrying into effect a sentence of excommunication pronounced against her by Urban VI., invaded her Italian territories with an army of the king of Hungary, made himself master of her person, and, to save all further trouble, had her smothered in a feather-bed.

Louis of Anjou, the queen's adopted heir, succeeded to her French dominions without any opposition, but was obliged to give way to Charles in the Neapolitan provinces. The latter was, however, ere long assassinated, in consequence of an imprudent attempt to take possession of the kingdom of Hungary; and, as his son Ladislaus was then only nine years old, Louis's son was enabled for some time to retain the whole of the disputed kingdom, with the exception of a few unimportant fiefs. But Ladislaus, when he came to years of discretion,

expelled his rival, after which he overran the dominions of the pope, and, at the moment of his death, seemed to threaten the independence of Florence, and with it that of all Italy. In his reign the kingdom of Naples was restored to the position in Italy which it had lost after the death of King Robert.

While the liberties of Italy were threatened at different times by the signors of Milan, and the kings of Naples, Florence acted a not inglorious part in maintaining the balance of power in the peninsula. According to M. Sismondi, this was the whole object of her policy. This, he says, furnishes us with a key to all her negotiations; this was the motive of all her alliances, and the cause of all her wars. It may, indeed, not without some show of reason, be alleged that she was actuated by views of this nature in her opposition to the Scaligeri and the Visconti, whenever they menaced the independence of the peninsula, as also in the part that she took in forming a league against John of Bohemia, and in her mistrust of Charles IV. And though it cannot be denied that her attacks upon Pisa and Lucca were often prompted by jealousy or ambition, they may nevertheless have sometimes been justified, by a well-grounded fear lest, from their continual alliance with the emperors and the Visconti, these towns might have become the rendezvous of all those who were hostile to the liberties of central Italy. But, in the mean time, she continued to change her laws, her constitution, and her rulers, in a manner that is almost unparalleled in the history of the world.

It has already been mentioned that the inhabitants, when they were terrified by the approach of the Emperor Henry VII., had made Robert, king of Naples, signor of their city. Two years afterwards that monarch sent his brother Peter to command their armies against Uguccione della Faggiola, of Pisa; but he was defeated and slain. The Count Novello, one of his best captains, whom he despatched to take the place of his brother, was obliged to give way to one Lando d'Agobbio, a low demagogue, who was, however, endowed with all the qualities which enable men in unsettled times to rise to the surface of society. The fact that no one had the hardihood to oppose this impudent upstart in the issuing of a debased currency, shows the depth of the degradation to which the city had fallen. After one year his tyranny was brought to an end. But it was not long before the Florentines were again obliged to have recourse to a foreign dictator. Their armies were defeated by Castruccio Castracani, the Ghibelline signor of Lucca; and they themselves had begun to tremble for their independence. In this emergency they put themselves under the protection of Charles, duke of Calabria, son of the king of Naples, by whose assistance they compelled Castruccio Castracani to retire. In the following year, the simultaneous deaths of Castruccio and Charles freed them both from a formidable foreign foe, and from one who might have become dangerous to their liberties, when his services were no longer required.

In the mean time, important changes were introduced

into the constitution. Two or three new magistrates, called Pennonieri, were appointed to assist the Gonfaloniere della Giustizia. The chief officers of the state began to be elected by lot. The names of those who were deemed capable of discharging the duties of the several offices for the next forty months were put into a bag, whence a certain number were taken out at random every two months. Those who were thus drawn were obliged forthwith to enter on their duties. As suspicions often arose that the names of certain citizens who were most capable of acting as magistrates did not always find their way into these bags, fresh ones were continually added at different times during the forty months. This practice was begun with the election of the Signoria, but was afterwards extended to that of the other chief magistrates of state.

By the departure of Louis from Italy, which took place immediately after the simultaneous death of Castruccio Castracani and the duke of Calabria, Florence was completely freed from the fear of aggression from abroad, or of tyranny at home. So greatly did the fortunes of the Lucchese decline with the death of their lord, that eight hundred of the German cavalry of the emperor, who had remained after him in Italy, made themselves masters of their city, and offered it for sale to the Florentines. The latter declined the opportunity of peaceably obtaining that principality which afterwards they vainly attempted, at the cost of much blood and treasure, to enslave; and the sovereignty of the city was bought by one Gherardo Spinola, a

Genoese. The Florentines immediately made an unsuccessful attempt to take it from him by force. About this time their opposition to John of Bohemia forms one of the brightest episodes in their history. Lucca then fell under the dominion of Mastino della Scala, the successor of Can Grande at Verona. The power of this prince, which was thus extended into Tuscany, excited the apprehensions of the Florentines, and induced them to enter into an alliance with the Venetians to oppose him. After many fruitless attempts in the course of the war to take Lucca by force, they agreed on the termination of hostilities to buy it from their enemies. They had scarcely been put in possession of it, when it was forcibly wrested from them by the Pisans.

Meantime their repeated discords at home showed that they continued to deserve the character of instability that had been ascribed to them by Dante. The Imborsazioni, or the putting into bags the names of those citizens who were to fill the principal offices of state, though admirably designed, was capable of abuse, and might be so managed as to secure for a particular party the places of government. In this manner a small oligarchical clique, composed of the most active and the most wealthy of the citizens, had contrived to monopolise the power of the republic. With the view of confirming themselves in their position, they conferred the dignity of Captain of the Guard, a new office that had lately been instituted, on a creature of their own, Gabrieli d'Agobbio, and assigned him a train of

followers, composed of one hundred horse and two hundred foot. This man was peculiarly obnoxious to many of the citizens; but he managed to crush all opposition till the capture of Lucca by the Pisans, which was exceedingly mortifying to the national pride. All classes were then sick of a popular government, and looked out for a dictator. In this time of perplexity, Walter de Brienne, duke of Athens, arrived in the city. This man was descended from one of the Crusaders who had settled in Greece, but he now retained merely the Grecian title, and was in reality an adventurer in the court of France. His character is thus given by Machiavelli: "He was avaricious and cruel, difficult of access, haughty in his tone of reply. He wished for the servile obedience, and not for the affections, of men; and for this reason he was more desirous of being feared than of being loved. His appearance was as disgusting as his character was bad: he was small and black, with a long thin beard; so that for no one reason was he deserving of favour." Seventeen years before, he had appeared in Florence as lieutenant of the duke of Calabria. By some means or other he had then made a favourable impression on the inhabitants, and they now appointed him Capitano del Popolo, under the hope that he would bring them through their difficulties. In the beginning of his administration, his hostility to the faction which had lately been predominant secured him the favour both of the old nobles and of the populace. He struck his opponents with terror by the fines, imprisonments, and

executions, which he ordered on various pretences. Trusting for support to the favour of one party and the fear of the other, he proposed that they should confer on him the unfettered sovereignty of the city. The Signoria remonstrated in vain: he was not only made lord of the city, but managed to have the office conferred on him for life. The first use he made of his power was to endeavour to free himself from those whom he deemed most likely to be his opponents or his rivals. The old noblesse of Florence were the peculiar objects of his suspicion; for although they had originally been his allies, he could not believe that his insolence would long be submitted to by such spirits as theirs. The cruelty of his disposition and the meanness of his talents were not fully made manifest till he thought himself secure in his position. He then threw off all the restraint which had formerly been dictated by policy, or imposed on him by fear. Like most vain tyrants, he was unable to perceive the limit up to which he might go, but which he could not transgress. His fondness for French manners, and his partiality to Frenchmen, offended the Florentines as much as the most outrageous acts of his tyranny. In this manner the measure of his iniquity was soon completed; and in less than one year after his accession, he was doomed to drink the cup of retribution. After the anger of the citizens had vented itself in the murder and mutilation of his minister, Gulielmo da Scesi, and his son, Cerrettieri Bisdomini, a youth only eighteen years of age, he fled from the city.

After the expulsion of this tyrant, various attempts were made to establish constitutions, which were always shortlived, in consequence of the reluctance of the old aristocracy to give to the citizens that share in the government which their increasing opulence and intelligence required. Even when they made these concessions, they failed to conciliate the good-will of the people by admitting them to a social equality in the common intercourse of life. At length, in the year 1348, an occasion arose on which the long-smothered anger and vindictiveness of the latter burst with terrible force on those whom they deemed the oppressors of their order. The nobles were elated by their success in driving from the city one Andrea del Strozzi, who, by selling corn at a reduced price in a time of famine, had endeavoured to form a party for himself, and they deemed the occasion a favourable one for making an attempt to regain the power that had been possessed by their ancestors. With this object in view, they continued to arm themselves, and even demanded assistance from the tyrants of Lombardy. Such measures could not escape the vigilance of a populace ever jealous of their superiors. On their side they made the same preparations for the defence of their liberties that their opponents had made for their destruction. They sought support from the republics of Perugia and Sienna. Thus the city was divided into two parties, each incensed with the desire, and provided with the means, of destroying the other. Each faction established its headquarters on opposite banks of the

Arno. Ere long a terrible conflict ensued, in which, after a protracted struggle, the nobles were completely defeated. The first use that the people made of their victory was to frame a constitution which should exclude the nobles from all share in the government. They divided their own order into three parts—the *popolo potente*, the *popolo mediocre*, and the *popolo basso*—and ordained that two of the Signoria should be chosen from the first, and three from each of the two last of these divisions. It was arranged that the Gonfaloniere should occasionally be taken from one, and occasionally from another of these, and that all the great offices of state should be filled only by men of plebeian families. In the words of Machiavelli, this ruin of the nobles was so great, and it so completely subdued them, that they never afterwards dared to take up arms against the people, and they continued to become more and more servile. For this reason, continues the historian, Florence lost not only all military reputation, but also all greatness of character. The effects of the decree, however, were considerably modified by the enrolling among the citizens of a considerable number of the ancient nobility. At the same time, some of the most obnoxious of the former were ennobled, and so rendered incapable of holding office.

A comparison made by Machiavelli between these discords of Florence and those of ancient Rome is worthy of notice. Its truth is singularly illustrated in the changes which were brought about both in the con-

stitution of Florence and in the character of its citizens. After adverting to the dissensions that in each of the above-named republics actually took place between the nobles and the populace, and reflecting on their causes, he goes on to say : "The civil dissensions of Rome were settled by discussion ; those of Florence always ended in fighting. Those at Rome were terminated by the passing of a law ; those of Florence by the banishment and death of many of the citizens. Those of Rome always increased the martial spirit of the nation ; those at Florence completely put an end to it. It is evident that these different results must have been caused by the difference in the objects which were sought after by the two people. The people of Rome desired that they might enjoy the highest honours of the state along with the nobles ; the people of Florence fought that they might be alone in the government, without allowing the nobles any share in it. And inasmuch as the desire of the Roman people was the more reasonable of the two, their course of aggression was more tolerable to the nobles, who readily yielded to their demands without causing them to have recourse to arms; so that, after some disputes, they generally agreed in passing a law, the object of which was to give satisfaction to the people, and to allow the nobles to remain in their former dignity. On the other hand, the things sought after by the people of Florence were injurious to others, and unjust in themselves, for which reason the nobility prepared to defend its rights with greater force ; so that these disputes were attended with bloodshed, and the

banishment of some of the citizens; and the laws which were passed after these disputes, were made, not with the view of promoting the general good, but entirely to serve the purpose of the conquering party. Another result of this was, that virtue became more prevalent in the commonwealth of Rome, according as the people carried their point; for as they were admitted to civil and military appointments, and to the governorships of provinces, along with the nobles, they became imbued with the virtue of the order with which they associated, and the state increased in power, while the character of the inhabitants improved. But in Florence the nobles were excluded from the offices of state as the people gained the upper hand; and if they wished to be readmitted to them, it was necessary for them, in all that regarded their public conduct, their feelings, and their mode of living—not only in appearance, but also in reality—to take after the people. The desire of appearing to belong to the people was the cause of the alterations that they made in their shields of arms, and in the appellations of their families; so that the military valour and greatness of mind which was originally in the nobles was extinguished, and these qualities could not be kindled among a people in whom they had never existed. The result of this was, that at each fresh change Florence became more humiliated and more abject."

The revolution that has just been recorded was followed by a short interval of internal tranquillity, during which the republic amply maintained her reputation

abroad. It was mainly by her firmness that the peninsula was prevented from falling beneath the domination of the Visconti. She alone, among the states of that part of Italy, resisted the exactions and opposed the inroads of certain hordes of adventurers who, under the command of Duke Werner, and afterwards under that of Fra Moreale, were devastating the land. But the demon of discord was not yet extinct. On this occasion it was revived by the heads of the families of the Albizzi and the Ricci. The real cause of their differences was the jealousy with which, in small states, opulent and influential individuals are wont to regard one another. Their hatred was so great, and so manifest, that at one time it required all the authority of the Signoria, backed by all lovers of order and tranquillity, to prevent their respective adherents coming to blows. State intrigues, however, soon afforded them an opportunity of giving vent to their anger. The pretext of their contention was the long-exploded quarrel of the Ghibellines and Guelfs.

At the end of the thirteenth century the republic had appointed a committee of Guelf citizens, whose business it was to see that all the great offices of the state were held by none but the adherents of their party. But after the death of Henry VII. all real apprehension of danger from the Ghibellines ceased, and the functions of the committee were rapidly becoming a dead letter. Many whose forefathers had been Ghibellines were allowed to hold high places in the republic. Nevertheless, ancient tradition, and a supposed connection with

the tyrants of Lombardy, still rendered the name of Ghibellines odious to the majority of the citizens. Piero degli Albizzi, a man of great influence in the republic, was descended from Ghibelline ancestors. Uguccione dei Ricci, the head of the rival family, passed, or rather revived, a law, that no Ghibelline should be allowed to hold office in the state. Albizzi, instead of opposing this law, and thereby rendering himself obnoxious to the suspicion of being a Ghibelline, gave it his most strenuous support; and thus not only did he parry the blow of his adversary, but even increased his popularity with the multitude. To give greater effect to this enactment, he got it ordained that the Capitani del Popolo were to determine who were Ghibellines, and to admonish them not to hold any place in the republic. Those that were thus excluded from civic honours were termed Ammoniti. As might be expected, a system so capable of being made an instrument of abuse was turned to account by both parties to get their friends into power, and to exclude their adversaries. An attempt to modify the evils arising therefrom was made by Uguccione dei Ricci, who got a law passed that three more Capitani del Popolo, of whom two were to be selected from the minor arts, should be added to the others, and that the list of the Ammoniti should be finally referred to a committee of twenty-four Guelf citizens. Matters continued in this state till the year 1375, when the animosity of the rival factions began to wear an aspect so serious that many were fearful lest a civil war should break out. With a view of arresting this

terrible calamity, the Signoria allowed the citizens to hold an assembly to deliberate on the state of the republic.

A harangue made on this occasion, and containing a vivid description of the then pervading evils of Florence and Italy, has come to us.* The speaker, after deploring the general corruption of all the states of Italy, which in his native city manifested itself in party spirit, proceeded to say,—"In all have religious feeling and the fear of God died away; men regard their oaths and their pledged faith only where it is expedient so to do: they have recourse to them, not with any intention of observing them, but under the hope of deceiving with greater facility; and as they succeed in deceiving with greater ease and security, they acquire a proportionably larger share of honour and glory. For this reason the wicked are praised as being clever, and the good are despised as being fools. The young men are indolent; the old men are debauched; every sex and every age abounds with vicious customs, which cannot be remedied by good laws, as even they are abused by evil practices. Hence it comes to pass, that when one party is expelled, and one division put an end to, another arises. For in a state that wishes to be governed rather by parties than by laws, when one party has remained without opposition, it must of necessity be divided in itself. It was the opinion of many that, when the Ghibelline party was destroyed, the Guelf might long survive it in honour and happiness. Nevertheless, a short time

* Machiavelli, *Ist.* lib. 3.

afterwards they were divided into Bianchi and Neri. Even when the Bianchi were destroyed, our city did not long remain without party—we were always fighting; at one time for the sake of the exiles, at another time in consequence of the differences between the people and the nobility. And now the city is again divided, and the names of Guelf and Ghibelline are revived, which had long since died away, and which it would have been good for the city if they had never existed."

These internal discords were partially lulled by the aggression of the legate of Pope Gregory XI., who took advantage of the unsettled state of the city to endeavour to add it to the dominions of his master. For three years did the appearance of danger from without unite the energies of the Florentines in the common cause of their country; but, on the cessation of this peril in the year 1378, they were again divided among themselves. The republic had on that occasion, for the first time, intrusted the management of the war to eight citizens, responsible to no other body, who were subsequently termed the eight war ministers; and their successes had made them popular with their countrymen. The civil government, which arrogated to itself the honour of being the representative of the old Guelf party, looked with peculiar suspicion on those who conducted a war against a potentate whom they were inclined to regard as their natural friend; and this mistrust of their policy was aggravated by a jealousy of their personal reputation. The existence of such a feel-

ing on the part of the government towards men who had many friends among the citizens, could not fail to rekindle the flames of discord in a state like Florence; and its effects were afterwards conspicuous in tumults as violent as any of those which had taken place between the Ghibellines and Guelfs, or the Bianchi and the Neri. The remnants of the different parties which had previously existed amalgamated together on either side, as they were led by prospects of aggrandisement or feelings of favour, and the republic was once more divided into two great factions contending for power. The more moderate of the nobles had entered into a coalition with the chief men of the burgher aristocracy, and were supported by the government. At the head of this party was Piero degli Albizzi. His ancient rival Uguccione dei Ricci made common cause with the citizens who had administered the war, and with those who were jealous of the party in power. They had on their side the members of the lesser arts, as well as the dregs of the populace. The former now comprised a much larger proportion of the people than before. It has already been mentioned that the city was at first divided into twelve arts, which number was subsequently increased to twenty-one. With the increase of population and commerce, and the multiplied subdivision of labour, there had sprung up a number of new trades which did not strictly belong to any of the twenty-one; and those who gained their subsistence in these trades were obliged to attach themselves to that art which bore the greatest affinity to their avocation. In this

manner a multitude of the work-people were enrolled in the art of the woollen trade, which soon began to exceed all others in numbers and strength. This art, as well as most of the others whose members were increased in the same manner, belonged to the lesser arts, and sided with the opposition. At the head of the party that was thus composed were the Alberti, the Ricci, and the Medici. Its strength had become so great that, despite the utmost exertions of their adversaries, it was able to carry the election of Salvestro de' Medici to the post of Gonfaloniere. This man, who was placed by the ultra-democratic party in the highest post in the republic, was of a remarkably moderate and conciliatory disposition, and limited his aim to the restoration of the constitution of 1348. The Signoria were reluctantly compelled to yield this point to the menacing attitude of the mob. The latter, however, were not content with the well-timed concession that had been made to their leader; they were anxious to have a large share of power vested exclusively in the lowest of the people. Many of the minor arts, in particular, complained, and brought forward several instances, of the frequent injustice they suffered from being incorporated with the trades to which they did not belong. This feeling on the part of the populace soon vented itself in violence; the mob set to burning and pillaging the houses of those whom they deemed their adversaries, and did not always spare their friends. They were exhorted by one of their leaders to continue their excesses till the number of transgressors should be

so great as to preclude all possibility of punishment. The authority of the government and of the peaceful citizens was completely paralysed. After a time, the mob ennobled Salvestro de' Medici to prevent his holding office, and elected one Micheli di Lando to the place of Gonfaloniere. He was endowed with something of the moderation which had distinguished Medici, and was more successful than he, during the year of his office, in appeasing the anger and restraining the violence of his supporters. But notwithstanding his moderation and his talents, the city was in a sad state of confusion for three years after his accession to power. All his influence with his party was unable to save Piero degli Albizzi, who was put to death on a very ill-supported charge of holding treasonable communication with the exiled citizens at Bologna.

At length the people grew weary of this reign of anarchy and disorder, and anxiously watched for an opportunity of freeing themselves from the tyranny of an unbridled democracy. This was presented to them by the overbearing behaviour of one Giorgio Scali, a member of the ruling party. His conduct, in endeavouring to prevent the law taking its course on one of his friends, so disgusted the people that they rose simultaneously and had him beheaded. They evinced their dislike to the principles of his party by insisting on the abrogation of the constitution that had been settled in 1348, and re-established by Salvestro de' Medici, and by recalling many of those who had lately been banished during their ascendency. Maso degli Albizzi, the repre-

sentative of the citizen who had fallen a sacrifice to the licentiousness of the times, became the leading man in the republic. Not long afterwards was introduced the custom of intrusting the chief management of affairs, and the nomination of magistrates, to a committee of citizens entitled a Balia, by which means it was evident that any citizen, who by any means could secure the appointment of his own friends thereon, would become the virtual sovereign of the state. In spite of one or two attempts at counter-revolutions, the Albizzi continued to maintain their ascendency for upwards of half a century.

Lucca remained subject to Pisa till the second visit of the Emperor Charles IV. to Italy, who procured its independence. From 1362 till 1364 the Florentines continued to make vigorous but vain efforts to enslave Pisa. After that, she was at various times ruled by petty tyrants; and at the end of the century, she, as well as Lucca, fell under the dominion of Gian Galeazzo Visconti. Both republics regained their independence soon after his death. The former, however, two years subsequently, was conquered by the Florentines; while the latter, under the family of Guinigi, remained independent of her powerful neighbour.

At various times in this century Genoa increased the number and strength of her colonies both in the Levant and in the Black Sea. Her commerce in the East embroiled her with the Venetians, with whom she was continually at war; and though hostilities often ceased, probably on account of mutual exhaustion, the two

maritime republics do not appear to have come to any well-defined treaty till after the total destruction of the armament of the Genoese at Chiozza, immediately contiguous to Venice, in the year 1380. This decisive engagement was followed by a peace concluded at Turin in the following year, in which Venice, notwithstanding her great victory over her maritime rival, was obliged to cede the greater part of Dalmatia to the Hungarians, who had been in alliance with the latter. Nor did Genoa enjoy much domestic tranquillity in the mean time. While King Robert was signor of the city, a great number of the exiled Ghibellines took up their headquarters at Savona, where they appear for a time to have established a sort of independent republic; but most of them made their way back after the conclusion of the famous siege. In 1342 the citizens proceeded to elect a chief magistrate of their own, to whom they gave the title of Doge. About ten years after that they put themselves under the protection of Galeazzo Visconti, but reassumed their independence on the partition of his states among his heirs. Though they had endeavoured to guard against the disturbances caused by the contentions of the families of the old nobility for power, by declaring several of them incapable of holding office, they began to be annoyed by the rivalries of the Adorni and the Fregosi, two families of plebeian origin, who had lately risen to importance. Towards the end of the century, one of the Adorni, to exclude his rival from power, made over his native city to the French. She afterwards became subject to Gian

Galeazzo Visconti. After this, she can never be ranked among the first-rate powers of the peninsula.

Among the republics south of the Po, the family of Este continued to maintain its position in Ferrara and the vicinity. Nicholas III., who succeeded to this principality in the year 1390, if he could not be said to be one of the leading potentates of the peninsula, certainly occupied a respectable position. At Parma a family of the name of Corrigiani had risen to importance, and occasionally aspired to sovereignty. Bologna was always claimed by the pope, and sometimes conquered by the Visconti; and, like other cities, often suffered from the contentions, or was tyrannised over by the chiefs, of rival factions. The other cities of Romagna remained, as at the time of Dante, subject to tyrants, for the most part the descendants of those that were mentioned by the poet. Among these the family of Malatesta, the lord of Rimini, the founders of which were said by the bard to have both the ferocity of a mastiff and the cunning of a traitor,* had risen to the greatest importance. The descendants of Guido di Montefeltro, who is so often mentioned by Dante, extended their dominions over the town of Urbino, and in the subsequent century were generally known by the title which they derived from the latter place.

* *Inf.* xxvii. 44, and xxviii. 41.

BOOK SECOND.

ITALIAN WARFARE.—BRACCIO DA MONTONE AND SFORZA ATTENDOLO.

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ITALIAN WARFARE.—BRACCIO DA MONTONE AND SFORZA ATTENDOLO.

CHAPTER I.

NATIVE MILITIA IN THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES.—EMPLOYMENT OF SARACENS BY FREDERIC II.—AFTERWARDS FRENCH, GERMANS, AND CATALANS ARE EMPLOYED BY THE DIFFERENT STATES.—ITALIANS FOR A TIME CONDUCT THEIR WARS ENTIRELY BY MERCENARIES.—FORMATION OF COMPANIES OF ADVENTURE—COMPOSED AT FIRST OF FOREIGNERS—AFTERWARDS OF ITALIANS.—ALBERIC OF BARBIANO.—COMPANY OF ST GEORGE—ACCOUTREMENTS AND MODE OF FIGHTING.

THE mode of warfare in usage among the Italians of the fifteenth century was in itself so remarkable, and is so intimately connected with the fortunes of the man whose life I have undertaken to narrate, that it will not be deemed superfluous if I here endeavour to give some account of its origin and progress.

It has already been mentioned that the inhabitants of the republics that were formed under the successors of Charlemagne and Otho, living, as they did, in constant dread of the irruptions of the Saracens and the

Huns, were compelled by necessity to learn the art of defending themselves. Thus it came to pass that each little state had its bands of native militia, who were ready to serve whenever required. Such was the origin of the military system which trained the armies that defeated the first Frederic at Alessandria and Legnano, and assisted the pontiffs in the protracted struggle that finally broke the heart and the spirit of his grandson. Of the assembling and arming of the city militia of the thirteenth century, when suddenly called on to act, we have the following humorous description given by Tassoni, a poet of the sixteenth century, in which, however, some allowance must be made for the exaggeration of caricature—

"Il martellar della maggior campana
Fe piu che in fretta ognun saltar del letto,
Diedesi all arma ; e che balzò le scale,
Chi corse alle fenestre, e chi al pitale.
. . . . . .
Fu chi prese per targa una padella.
E un secchio in testa in cambio di celata,
E chi con un roncon' e la corazza
Corse bravando e minacciando in piazza."*

Secchia Rapita, Canto i.

Against these bodies of native militia, fighting though

* "The great bell's toll now echoed on the breeze,
And up from bed jumped all the people straight.
Summoned to arms, some bolted quick down stairs,
Some to the windows rushed, and some to prayers.
. . . . . .
Some with disdain
Took frying-pans for shields, and forward pressed,
With buckets on for helms ; others were fain
To brandish hedgebills, and, in breastplates bright,
Ran swaggering to the square prepared for fight."

they were for the head of the Christian church, the last emperor of the house of Suabia scrupled not to employ the Saracen marauders, who were everywhere to be found in his hereditary dominions of Calabria and Sicily. As these were looked upon by their Italian fellow-subjects as aliens in religion and race, and were robbers by profession, this monarch is generally considered as having been the first to introduce the custom of the employment of foreign mercenaries. After the licentiousness that followed the too rapid growth and the premature prosperity of the Italian republics had caused the decline of the patriotism and bravery so necessary for the existence of an efficient militia, this custom, which had been so strongly reprobated in him, was unanimously followed. In the free cities, the inhabitants, being generally intent upon the making or enjoyment of a fortune, had no wish to encounter the hardships of service; and in the others the petty tyrants were unwilling to rely too much on the valour or fidelity of those whom they had enslaved. The signors of Verona and Milan, who trusted to the assistance of the emperors to enable them to maintain or to increase their dominions against their own countrymen, employed the soldiers of nations whom they affected to despise as barbarians. M. Sismondi informs us that the army with which, in 1313, Can Grande conquered the Paduans, was composed almost entirely of mercenaries, accustomed from their youth to the profession of arms; and that even the latter, though fighting for their liber-

ties, had several hireling bands, including those of two English adventurers, by name Bertrand and William Herman. Though the trade of the mercenary soldier was still in its infancy, this campaign affords an admirable example of the fruits which Machiavelli* says must always be expected from their employment: they carried on the war with the least possible danger to themselves, and the greatest disregard of the persons and properties of others. The cruelties which, in the course of the campaign, were inflicted on the inhabitants of Vicenza, are represented on all hands as having been most atrocious; while on the field of action, which decided its fate, there were found dead only six gentlemen and forty plebeians.†

Though the patriotism of the citizens of Tuscany was preserved longer than that of the other Italian states, and though the dissensions of the Ghibellines and Guelfs, and of the Bianchi and Neri, had kept them in the habit of fighting, they came in time to follow the example that had been set to them by their countrymen of Lombardy. The disputes concerning the sovereignty of Naples had introduced a number of French and Aragonese adventurers, whose services might always be bought. Several of the latter also had been brought into Italy by the commerce of the maritime republics; and they became so numerous that, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the name of

* Machiavelli, *Principe* xii.

† So says M. Sismondi, on the authority of Alberto Mussato, though the passage of Dante, already quoted, would lead to an opposite opinion.—See note, page 102.

Catalans was bestowed on mercenaries of every description. Villani informs us that, in the year 1321, the Florentines sent to Frioli to hire cavalry for the purpose of commencing a war with Lucca; and four years later they followed up their hostilities, with an army composed, to a great extent, of mercenaries, under the command of one Raymond of Cordova. When the Emperor Louis of Bavaria entered Italy, his cupidity was excited by the fine German cavalry in the pay of Visconti; and after his departure, eight hundred horsemen of the same nation were able to sell the sovereignty of the city of Lucca — so completely had the Italians already become dependent on the arms of the mercenaries.

To explain how this dependence led to the formation of the companies of adventurers by which the peninsula was devastated in the fourteenth century, it is merely necessary to compare its state at that period with that of the other less civilised countries of Europe. Whatever of the spirit of the chivalry, so rife in the latter, had ever existed in the former, was extinguished by the rapid development of its commerce. The military art, elsewhere the most esteemed, was there in little repute; political sagacity was thought more of than personal bravery. The natives of the land whose cities offered the fairest prizes to the captor, whose fields tempted the marauder with the greatest promise of booty, were themselves averse to the toils and dangers of the camp. The manifold political divisions of the land made it a scene of perpetual warfare; and its

material prosperity enabled its princes amply to reward the services of others. What wonder, then, if many men were induced to forego the honour which in their own country was attached to the profession of arms, for the more solid prospects of gain in Italy? As might naturally be expected, the soldiers who offered their services to the republics of Italy were tainted by many of the vices which are supposed to be engendered by a military life, but unadorned with the virtues which the profession of arms generally produces: they were remarkable for their cruelty, rapacity, and contempt for the lives and properties of others, but in no way distinguished for personal bravery, generosity, or frankness of character. During the short intervals of peace, they had every inducement to remain in a country where they were quite certain that their services would ere long be again in requisition; and they soon came to be organised into regular companies, for the purpose of plundering the unmartial population in peace, and selling their services to them in war.

The first company of adventurers of this nature, of which we have any regular account, was formed in Sicily in the year 1302, when a number of soldiers from Catalonia, and from Genoa and some other parts of Italy, who remained in the island after the departure of the king of Naples, having chosen for their captain one Fra Rugieri, of the order of the Templars, arrogated to themselves the title of "The Company," and went about ravaging with fire and sword. The devastations of these men, however, were carried on principally by sea, and

for the most part confined to Greece and the shores of the Levant; and we do not hear of the formation of any such company in the interior of Italy till the year 1346. It was then that a German adventurer, of the name of Werner, afterwards known as Duke Guarnieri, proposed to a band of mercenaries, who in the previous year had been discharged by the Pisans, to unite themselves under him, and to follow, on their own account, the trade which they had hitherto carried on on behalf of others. This society of adventurers at first consisted but of two thousand horse, but was soon increased by a number of recruits from all quarters. They went about everywhere pillaging and exacting tribute, and were but feebly resisted by the republics and petty tyrants, whose subjects wanted the courage, and whose hirelings often lacked the inclination, to offer them any effectual opposition. There was no crime or cruelty from which they refrained; and Duke Guarnieri joined to the title of Chief of the Grand Company those of "Enemy of God, of pity, and of compassion"—all of which he bore engraved on his breastplate. A great number of his original followers, after they had enriched themselves with booty, contributions, and sometimes with pay for their services, returned to Germany to enjoy the fruits of their labour. Two years afterwards we find the same duke in command of a company, bearing the same name, in the service of the queen of Naples. On this occasion he allowed himself to be surprised and taken prisoner by the enemy, that he might enlist in their service, and so have a better

opportunity of plundering the territories of his former employers.

The avocation of this adventurer had proved so lucrative to himself and his followers that his example was soon followed by a number of others. A company similar to the one that had been commanded by him was formed by one Montreal d'Alberno, a knight of St John of Jerusalem, afterwards known by the name of Fra Moreale, who, having been employed by the king of Hungary in his wars with the queen of Naples, had become acquainted with Duke Guarnieri. The strength of this company was increased by an accession of noblemen and common soldiers from Germany, and by many deserters from the armies of the states of Italy. After having quitted the Neapolitan territories, it began devastating Romagna, which, from being subject to a set of tyrants who were individually weak and disunited among themselves, was exposed to the ravages of adventurers of every description. Some attempt to restore order in this province was made by the tribune, Rienzi, who summoned Fra Moreale to Rome, and had him executed as a common robber. But after the failure of Rienzi had delivered the company from all fear of opposition from this quarter, they chose Count Lando in the place of Fra Moreale; and, having avenged the death of the latter by ravaging the territory of Ravenna, they passed on to Apulia, and carried on their devastations within sight of the city of Naples. They were soon afterwards employed by the tyrants of Bologna, Mantua, and Verona, in the war which

they carried on in concert against Galeazzo Visconti, on which occasion they gave an admirable specimen of their value as soldiers, by enriching themselves at the expense of their employers, and flying before the troops of the enemy. Of the people of central Italy, the Florentines alone had the courage to oppose them. When their services were demanded by the Siennese, they refused them permission to pass through their territory, on their way from Lombardy. On their attempting to force a passage through the Apennines, they were met by a small body of mountaineers, who gave them a defeat so discouraging that many of them, who then for the first time experienced the dangers of warfare, forsook their occupation. This reception, so different from the almost bloodless battles in which they were usually engaged, inspired them with such terror that, two years afterwards, on the failure of a negotiation with the Florentines, they took care not to enter their territories.

Another company, consisting principally of Englishmen, was brought into Italy at a somewhat later period, by the Marquis of Montferrat. The part of France between the Alps and the Pyrenees, which in the twelfth century had taken the lead, even of Italy, in civilisation, had, like it, suffered from the depredations of adventurers who had found their way thither, in the wars between England and France. These naturally presented themselves to the notice of the Marquis, when he was engaged in a struggle with his formidable neighbours of Milan, and he found no difficulty in getting a number of them to cross the Alps, and to enter his

service. This last company, perhaps, inflicted a more grievous injury on the Italians by the plague, which they brought with them from Provence, than by their subsequent depredations. About the same time another, composed principally of Germans, and commanded by Amichino Baumgarten, was raised by Galeazzo Visconti, and afterwards employed by the Pisans. Another, entitled that of St George, was formed by Ambrose, the natural son of Bernabos Visconti, and let loose by him on the territories of Perugia and Sienna. Thus, at the end of the fourteenth century, Italy was devastated at one and the same time by these four companies of adventurers, or, as they might more justly be called, professional robbers. Though they had no objection to serve on opposite sides, they seldom did much harm to each other, and the different states generally received as much injury from those whom they thus employed as from those by whom they were undisguisedly attacked. Of all these companies, the military reputation of the English was undoubtedly the greatest—a circumstance which may be ascribed, in some degree, to the physical superiority of the men, but still more to the talents of Sir John Hawkwood, by whom they were commanded. His conduct of the Florentine war, with Galeazzo Visconti, shows that he surpassed all the other mercenary captains of the time in his knowledge of strategy. On his death in 1394, the Florentines testified their approbation of his services by entombing him with great honour in their cathedral, and perpetuating his memory by an equestrian portrait, which remains to this day.

It has already been remarked, that the absence of the feudal system in Italy was one great cause of the employment of foreign troops and foreign generals by the different states. But towards the middle of the fourteenth century, a class of men sprang up in the Territories of the Church, whose circumstances were not very different from those of the minor feudal lords in some parts of Europe. The tyrants of this province of Italy, who even at the close of the thirteenth century were, according to Dante, continually at war with one another, had always affected a considerable degree of independence of their rightful sovereign the pope: its physical nature, abounding with impregnable positions in the fastnesses of the mountains, was peculiarly favourable to the assertion of this partial independence, and the removal of the pontiffs to Avignon left them almost without the appearance of control. As the inhabitants of Italy were addicted to commerce, and lived principally in towns, these tyrants had not, like the nobles of England and France, a number of vassals ready at all times to follow them to the camp, nor were they possessed of anything like the same extent of territory; but they generally claimed dominion over, and exacted tribute from, some petty town in the neighbourhood. The towns themselves were generally well fortified, and, from their situation, well adapted for defence; and after Italy began to be ravaged by companies of adventurers, even the cultivators of the soil were forced to dwell in them for safety. These petty lords seemed to be peculiarly fitted by their position to be the leaders

of the predatory bands: their circumstances, in some degree, resembled those of the robber chieftains, the ruins of whose castles are still seen on the banks of the Rhine—beyond the walls of their castles or their cities they were powerless; they had no protector to look up to, and were without union among themselves. Thus, being unable to defend their territories from the companies, they soon began to think it better to despoil others than to be themselves despoiled. By the beginning of the latter half of the fourteenth century, the grandsons of those who, in the age of Dante, were continually at war among themselves, had attained considerable reputation as the captains of mercenary bands; and the names of Francis of Ordelaffi, the signor of Forli, the Malatesta of Rimini, and Rodolph of Varano, the signor of Camerino, whose forefathers are all mentioned by the poet, are frequently noticed in the military annals of the age. One of these robber chieftains, Alberic of Barbiano, the lord of some castle in the neighbourhood of Bologna, succeeded to the command of the company of St George, which had been formed by Ambrose Visconti, and gained great glory by his success. He it was who first showed that his countrymen were capable of being made at least as good soldiers as the foreign adventurers by whom they had hitherto been served.

The custom of waging war by means of companies of hireling troops continued to prevail in Italy, till it had almost ceased to be independent. But towards the end of the fourteenth century, the Italians began to engage

in a service which had previously been carried on almost exclusively by men of other nations. They became willing enough to try the profession of arms, for the same reason that, one century ago, they had abandoned it to the foreigner. The premiums of successful warfare had become so great, and the mode in which it was conducted had made its dangers so small, that it possessed at least the same attraction for the artisan as any other profession. M. Sismondi states that the regular pay of the soldiers, varying from thirteen to sixteen florins* a-month, was greater than that of a workman of the best-paid trades, besides which the former often received extraordinary prizes in the lottery of war, and was allowed to rob and to commit all sorts of excess with impunity. For these reasons, then, Barbiano found no difficulty in raising a body of Italians, which he named the Company of St George, in honour of that in which he had received his military education. With these troops he entered the service of Pope Urban VI., and on the 28th of April 1379 he attacked and defeated a company of Bretons, then reckoned the best soldiers in Italy. From this time forward, both the military fame

* It is not easy to ascertain the exact value of the Italian florin of the fifteenth century: M. Sismondi says, that the florin which was first coined at Florence in 1242 was worth eleven francs, forty centimes, of French money—about 9s. 2d. sterling. Mr Dennistoun, in his introduction to the Lives of the Dukes of Urbino, after a careful analysis of the opinions of the best authorities on the subject, assumes that the coinage of the Italian ducat or florin of the fifteenth century was about equal to that of the present Spanish dollar, or 4s. 4d. English; and that it would then have purchased about twelve times as much of the amount of luxuries and necessaries of life as at present. According to his estimate, the soldiers' pay must have varied from £2, 15s. to £3, 10s. per month, and would have gone as far as £33 or £42 does at present.

of the Italians, and the personal reputation of this general, continued to increase. The captains of the troops also ceased to be mere robbers, and, instead of fighting only to enrich themselves by booty, they looked to titles and fiefs as the rewards of their services. To reign was the great object of ambition among them. Alberic himself attained the dignity of high constable of Sicily. His company was looked upon as the military school of his country—all his compatriots who were desirous of serving as soldiers flocked to his standard—all who hoped themselves to be generals or sovereigns came to serve in his camp. Among these were Jacobo del Verme, Facino Cane, Otto buon Terzo, Braccio da Montone, and Sforza Attendolo, the two last of whom became conspicuous in the history of their country.

The arms and equipments of these companies of adventurers were such as would naturally be selected by men who wished to reap as many of the advantages, and to encounter as few of the perils of war as possible. When their nature and the circumstances under which they fought are duly considered, it will not be matter of surprise that, "for once in the history of mankind, the art of defence had outstripped that of destruction."* In general, two thirds of an army consisted of cavalry. The plate armour worn by the soldiers afforded a tolerably secure defence against the pointed swords and lances, the weapons then most in use. Intent as all were upon enriching themselves, each combatant was more desirous to unhorse and capture than to slay his

* Hallam.

antagonist. A handsome ransom was generally paid for the officers who had been taken prisoners; but the common soldiers, who had nothing to give, were for the most part set at liberty, after they had been stripped of their armour. So eager were they upon the acquisition of booty that many an incipient victory was changed into a defeat in consequence of the troops, the instant they had gained an advantage, dispersing in quest of spoil, and then being set upon by their rallied opponents. The infantry appear to have been used, not so much in regular action as in mountain warfare, and in the attacking and defending of fortresses. As the country so abounded with these, that, in the words of Muratori, one beheld, as it were, a wood of them in many places, no small part of each campaign was spent in the manner last mentioned. Not only were stone fortresses erected in important or naturally strong positions, but wooden towers were also carried about, and placed in situations whence their occupants might prevent or retard the advance of an enemy. Cross-bows and missiles of all sorts were made use of by those who were within, as well as by those who attacked, these towers; but though these missiles might compel an assailant or defender to relinquish his position, and though they might produce much confusion among a compact body of men, they did not often inflict fatal or dangerous wounds.

We have no well-authenticated account of gunpowder having been used in Italian warfare till the battle of Chiozza, in 1378. The Venetians on that occasion

brought into the field two pieces of artillery, denominated *bombardi;* but the records which we have of the engagement lead us to think that they were merely used in a clumsy attempt to blow stones into the air, under the desperate expectation that they might fall on the heads of their adversaries.* We afterwards read frequently of fortifications having been blown up by powder, and of these *bombardi* having been brought into the field on divers occasions. They were, however, in all probability, nothing more than a rude species of mortar; and though they might have been often effective in compelling engineers to desist from their operations, and in annoying those who might have been in otherwise impregnable positions, it is not likely that they were ever used with effect, from any distance at least, against a body of men in motion. Indeed, it is probable that the time required to load them was so long as to render any continuous fire out of the question. Accordingly, they seem to have been but of little service in regular engagements. It is questionable even if they did much damage to masonry till the year 1447, when the Milanese general astonished his contemporaries by the use he made of them in the capture of a city, said at that time to be the best fortified in Italy. And the success with which he adopted the somewhat hazardous

* "On chargeait pendant la nuit ces instruments meurtriers, qu'on designait alors par le nom de bombardes, et on les tirait le matin. Il ne parait pas qu'on fit plus d' une décharge en vingt-quatre heures, et les pierres, lancées probablement vers le ciel, comme nos bombes décrivaient une parabole, ainsi manquaient ils très souvent le but; mais lorsqu' elles l'atteignaient, elles causaient un ravage prodigieux."—Sismondi, *Républiques Italiennes.*

experiment of firing them over the heads of his soldiers, who were then in the trenches beneath, shows that the science of gunnery must have made some little progress during the sixty-seven years that had elapsed since its introduction into Italy. About two years after that, the citizens of Milan caused some panic among the ranks of their opponents by bringing into battle a species of gun called *fucili*, probably somewhat resembling a clumsy sort of musket; but the bullets fired therefrom do not appear to have made any impression on the armour of the regular troops.

Thus, though the evils of war were undoubtedly great, they were not, as in more ancient or modern times, aggravated by the horrors of carnage. The Tiber and the Po were not seen foaming with the blood of the combatants. If the woeful tidings of a defeat came to a city, the grief caused by the public calamity was not, as in the heroic ages, increased by the mourning of private families for their many relatives that had been immolated to the god of war by the two-thonged whip in which he is said to delight.* Nor did the loss of friends cause conquering heroes to weep on the evening of their victories.†

* "ὅταν δ' ἀπευκτὰ πήματ', ἄγγελος πόλει
στυγνῷ προσώπῳ, πτωσίμου στρατοῦ φέρη,
πόλει μὲν ἕλκος ἓν τὸ δήμιον τυχεῖν·
πολλοὺς δὲ πολλῶν ἐξαγισθέντας δόμων
ἄνδρας διπλῇ μάστιγι, τὴν Ἄρης φιλεῖ,
δίλογχον ἄτην, φοινίαν ξυνωρίδα."

Æschyli Agamemnon.

† The loss of his friends is said to have caused the Duke of Wellington to have shed tears on the evening of the 18th of June 1815.

CHAPTER II.

BRACCIO DA MONTONE AND GIAN ATTENDOLO — THEIR EARLY FRIENDSHIP IN THE CAMP OF ALBERIC BARBIANO.—NAME OF SFORZA GIVEN TO THE LATTER — BIRTH OF HIS ELDEST SON FRANCESCO. — SFORZA ENTERS THE SERVICE OF THE FLORENTINES—IS DEFEATED BY ALBERIC BARBIANO—CAUSES OF HIS QUARREL WITH TARTAGLIA.—SUBSEQUENT SUCCESS AGAINST THE PISANS—RECEIVES A PENSION FROM THE FLORENTINES—ENTERS THE SERVICE OF POPE JOHN THE XXIII.—IS MADE COUNT OF COTIGUOLA—LEAVES THE POPE'S SERVICE FOR THAT OF LADISLAUS, KING OF NAPLES —WHO MAKES HIS ELDEST SON COUNT OF TRICARICO.—BRACCIO DA MONTONE TRIES IN VAIN TO MAKE HIMSELF MASTER OF PERUGIA — ENTERS THE SERVICE OF LADISLAUS—IS AFTERWARDS ENGAGED BY THE FLORENTINES — FAME OF BRACCIO AND SFORZA — THEIR DIFFERENT TACTICS — THEY ARE OPPOSED TO ONE ANOTHER—LADISLAUS SUCCEEDED BY JOAN II. — SFORZA MAKES OFFER OF HIS ALLEGIANCE TO HER — IS SEIZED, IMPRISONED, LIBERATED, AND AGAIN IMPRISONED BY JACQUES OF BOURBON. —TREACHEROUS CONDUCT OF BRACCIO.

AMONG the officers that have been mentioned as serving in the camp of Alberic there were two—namely, Braccio da Montone and Sforza Attendolo—whose military reputation became so great, and who played such conspicuous parts in the history of their country, that their careers deserve to be specially noticed.

The former of these captains was born in the year 1368, the latter in the year 1369, and both were natives of the territory that was claimed by the church. The former of these derived his name from a noble family possessed of the castle of Montone, in the vicinity of Perugia, to the sovereignty of which city he himself afterwards aspired. The latter also was said by some

to have been born of noble and wealthy parents, and he is extolled by his biographer Cribellius for having preferred the dangers of the camp to the easy enjoyment of his hereditary honours and wealth. This account of his origin seems to be contradicted by an anecdote of his early life, which is said to have been frequently referred to by his grandson, Galeazzo Sforza —namely, that one day, while working in the fields near his native village, Cotignola, he was asked by some soldiers to join them, on which he threw an axe, which he happened to hold in his hand, into an oak, declaring that if it remained in the tree he would follow them, but that if it fell on the ground he would continue in his former avocation, and that, by the chance of the axe remaining, he was induced to adopt the profession which made dukes of his descendants. This account of his former avocations is also confirmed by a caricature, said in the year 1412 to have been painted in all the public places of Rome, representing the great general suspended by his right foot to a gallows, and holding in his left hand a scroll containing the following epitaph:—"I am Sforza, a peasant of Cotignola, a traitor, who has committed twelve acts of treachery to the church contrary to my honour, stipulations, promises, and agreements, all of which I have broken." Be this as it may, he seems to have acquired some reputation as a commander before the formation of the company by Barbiano, after which, following the example of the other captains of his age, he entered the camp of that general.

It was while he was in this service that the name of Sforza was given to him by his great commander-in-chief, in consequence, it is said, of his violent language on the occasion of a dispute about the division of booty. It was possible also that he might have been so called in consequence of his habit, for which he was afterwards renowned, of always attacking the enemy with all his forces. He also made acquaintance with Braccio da Montone, who, like himself, had come to seek military knowledge under the most renowned captain of the day. During the early part of the career of these two generals, their superiority of talent, the cause of their subsequent rivalry, knit them together in the bond of the most intimate friendship, in token of which they made all their followers wear the same sort of short military cloak over their armour, with only a slight difference in the colour for the sake of distinction. Sforza soon afterwards took service along with his former master, Alberic, under Galeazzo Visconti; but being disgusted by the intrigues of one of his contemporaries, in the year 1401, he passed over to the republic of Florence. On the 21st day of July of that year, while he was on his way to the latter city, his concubine, Luscia di Torsano, who remained at San Miniato, a small town in the neighbourhood, presented him with his first-born son, whom, in memory of a deceased brother, he named Francesco. It was this son, the inheritor of all his father's talents and fortune, who afterwards became Duke of Milan. In the same year which brought into the world one who was to add

such lustre to his house, the emperor, Robert of Bavaria, conferred on him a mark of honorary distinction by adding a lion to his former crest.

The first campaign in which Sforza was engaged against his old master in arms was not attended with success. He was sent, along with Tartaglia, another condottiere of the day, to the assistance of Bentivoglio, the signor of Bologna, a city which the Florentines regarded as the key of their territory. The forces of the Florentines were hurried into action by the rashness of Bentivoglio, and completely defeated by the army of Alberic. Sforza, justly it may be, but more probably out of envy and a desire to save his own character and reputation, attributed the defeat to Tartaglia's abandoning a post which he had been particularly ordered to maintain, and his reproaches on this head were the cause of a deep-rooted hatred entertained towards him by that general till the end of his life. Though the situation of the Florentines was critical, Sforza managed to rally their spirits in a manner which showed that his influence at least had not been shaken by his misfortune, and he was about to collect what forces he could to make head against Visconti, when that formidable enemy was carried off by the plague. However, he soon had another opportunity of increasing his fame. The Florentines, determined to revenge their defeat, had now become more intent than ever on the conquest of their ancient rival Pisa, which had, for some time past, been under the protection of the Duke of Milan; and with a view to this they invaded its territory with

an army in which both Tartaglia and Sforza were employed, under the general superintendence of Bertoldo Ursini. The prosperous issue of the campaign was generally ascribed to some successes gained by a rare combination of artifice and courage exhibited by Sforza, and the republic testified its sense of his merits by conferring on him an annual pension of fifty pieces of gold. Shortly after this he received another accession of fortune for services rendered to Nicholas, marquis of Este. The dominions of that prince were threatened by Otto Terzo, an ancient condottiere, who had held high command in the armies of the Duke of Milan, and endeavoured, after the decease of that prince, to retain part of his conquests for himself. After a short campaign, however, he was defeated and taken prisoner by Sforza, and subsequently put to death by the order of the Marquis. The victorious general was on this occasion presented by the prince, whose dominions he had saved, with the town of Monteculo, and with a standard of adamant.

At the conclusion of this war he returned again to the Florentines, and was employed by them to assist Pope John XXIII. against Ladislaus, king of Naples. In this undertaking fortune continued to befriend him. He gained a complete victory over that monarch near Rocca Secca; but unluckily, if not for himself, at least for those in whose cause he was fighting, he was prevented by the jealousy of his brother commander, Paul Orsini, from following up his success. The pope, being short of money, made him Count of his native village of

Cotignola as a recompense for arrears of pay that were due to him. The breaking out of a fire in his native town, kindled, as was supposed, at the instigation of somebody who was jealous of his rising fortunes, afforded him an opportunity of showing his paternal care of his newly-acquired subjects. Immediately after the catastrophe he sent provisions and money to all who had suffered by the flames, and assisted them in the rebuilding of their houses.

The perpetual intrigues and jealousy of Paul Orsini disgusted him with the service of the pope, and on the expiration of the period for which he had been engaged he passed over to Ladislaus. That monarch readily entered into terms with one who was among the most successful of modern captains, and, with the view of attaching him to his service, he made him lord over six cities in his dominions. He also made his eldest son, Francesco, then only twelve years old, Count of Tricarico, which appears to have been the reason of his always having been denominated "the Count" by his contemporaries, until he attained a higher title. And having heard much about the nascent genius of Francesco, who was then being educated at Ferrara along with the scions of the family of Este, he requested that the youth should be brought to him. It was said that the impression which young Francesco made on the king was even more favourable than he had been led to expect by the praises of the father. Already, says his biographer, his excellent figure and carriage, and beautiful outline of feature, had turned the eyes of all

towards him, and it was evident that he had even then a vigorous intellect, meditating no despicable projects.

The desertion of this general from the party of the Florentines and the pope allowed scope for the genius of Braccio da Montone. After having, along with Sforza, served an apprenticeship in the camp of Alberic of Barbiano, he had retired to his castle of Montone, and occupied himself with endeavouring to conquer the neighbouring city of Perugia. After several unsuccessful attempts, he was obliged, by the fury of those whom he wished to enslave, to fly from his country and take refuge in the kingdom of Naples. While there, he won the favour of Ladislaus by his military talents, and entertained some expectation of being enabled, by the assistance of that monarch, to return to Perugia. But the inhabitants of that city, dreading nothing so much as the falling under the dominion of a petty tyrant, promised to open their gates to the king if he would cease to show countenance to one whom they believed to entertain designs dangerous to their liberty; and Ladislaus, to his disgrace, not only accepted their offer, but even, it is said, promised to have Braccio assassinated. The latter, getting information of these designs, escaped from the territory of the king, and was soon afterwards engaged by the government of Florence. While in that service, he had gained considerable distinction by the manner in which he conducted a campaign against his former employer. Having placed the small army under his command in the fortresses in the neighbourhood of Cortona, he avoided a general action, but kept

diligent watch over the movements of the enemy, so as to be ready to take advantage of the first blunder. By this means he managed to surprise sundry detachments of Neapolitan troops, to cut off their supplies, and to reduce the whole army of Ladislaus to such distress that he was compelled, after having left garrisons in Perugia, Cortona, and several of the fortified places he had taken, to fall back upon Rome. The subsequent desertion of Sforza to the party of the king left him without any rival in the service of the Florentines. It may well be supposed that the rising fortunes and increasing dignities of his former brother in arms, who was now serving under the opposite banner, awakened in him some degree of jealousy, and that it was galling to him to reflect, while he himself had failed in making himself master of Perugia, there were five cities that hailed his ancient contemporary as lord, and that his dignities were increased by many marks of favour from the king.

Little doubt was now entertained of the superiority of these two men to the other condottieri of Italy. But the nature of the tactics in which each of them excelled was very different. It was the custom of Braccio to profit, whenever he could, by delay; to avoid general actions, to accustom his soldiers to fight in small parties, to cut off the supplies and intercept the detachments of the enemy, and to be always on the alert to take advantage of the blunders of those to whom he was opposed. He was never above trying to promote treason in the camp of his adversary. On the

contrary, Sforza loved to bring all his army into action at once. He sought general engagements, in which, from his great personal courage, and from the confidence reposed in him by his soldiers, he usually had the superiority; he frequently astonished his enemy by the celerity of his movements; and if he occasionally made use of artifices, they were always for the purpose of attacking with advantage. Hence it came to pass that his campaigns were frequently more fruitful of glory than of profit, while the former often carried his point without adding to his renown by a single victory. Such was the system of the two generals, who were hereafter, for the most part, opposed to one another by the contending parties of Italy.

The renewal of the war between Ladislaus and the pope was the first occasion on which these captains were employed under opposite banners. In the beginning, neither of them seems to have signalised himself by any exploit worthy of notice. Sforza was ordered to blockade Paolo Orsini, the pope's general, in a fastness in Ancona; while the king, who marched directly against the pontiff, soon made himself master of Rome, and having conquered, himself, nearly all the patrimony of the church, turned his attention to Perugia, Bologna, and other towns on the confines of Tuscany, whence he began to menace even the territory of Florence. After Braccio had made one or two inefficient attempts to recover Perugia, the Florentines were glad to obtain a respite, by signing a truce with the victorious monarch, and were shortly afterwards effectually

delivered from their fears by his very sudden illness and death.

This event for a time gave a check to the rising fortunes of Sforza, and in some degree favoured those of his rival. Ladislaus was succeeded by his sister, Joan II., the widow of William of Austria—a woman of weak understanding and profligate character, who was generally ruled by the favourite whom she selected for the gratification of her lascivious passion. Sforza, as soon as he received intelligence of the death of the king, and of the accession of his sister, reduced many of the cities of Tuscany to her obedience; for a time quelled the Romans, who had rebelled and driven from their city several Neapolitan officers; and betook himself to Naples, where, after having made tender of allegiance to the new sovereign, he asked permission to be allowed to retain the honours which had been conferred on him by her predecessor. On his arrival there he was received with all apparent marks of sincerity by the queen. The reigning favourite, at this time, was one Pandolfo Aleppo, a man of good birth and great beauty. The queen, who, after the death of her husband and brother, had cast off all affectation of restraint, had made this man chamberlain of the palace, and allowed him to order all things in the kingdom. The illustrious warrior, rendered powerful by his many fiefs in the kingdom of Naples, by his superior talents, and by the devotion of the army which he had so often led to victory, became an object of jealousy to this worthless intriguer, who, disregarding the pro-

fessed, and it is thought also the real, wishes of his mistress, had him along with his family seized and cast into prison. But as all his towns remained faithful to him, and as his brothers, who had followed the same profession as himself, threatened to avenge the insult that had been offered to the head of their family, Pandolfo began to think it would be his best policy to endeavour to make friends of such a powerful subject. Accordingly he had him liberated from captivity, confirmed in the possession of all his fiefs, and created high constable of the kingdom, but at the same time he retained as hostages for his fidelity his children and two of his brothers.

A revolution was soon caused by the marriage of the queen with Jacques of Bourbon, and her conduct to her husband. She refused to allow him the functions of royalty, or to dignify him with any title except that of Count of Tarento. The Neapolitans, already disgusted with the vices of Joan and the sway of her favourites, joined in hailing him as king on his arrival; and he was not slow to avail himself of their proffered allegiance. His first act was to put to death Pandolfo Aleppo, whom he regarded as the prime counsellor of the queen; and Sforza, who alone of the magnates of the land remained faithful to his mistress, he put into prison, and caused to be tortured. It is generally supposed that his life would have fallen a sacrifice to the rage of Jacques, but for the firmness of his sister-in-law Margaret, wife of Michael Attendolo, who had four of the Neapolitan ambassadors

seized and retained in the camp of her husband, as hostages for the safety of her brother. His property, in the mean time, was confiscated, and he was forced to resign all claim to the towns that he had acquired in the Neapolitan dominions. His popularity among all classes was so great that the king deemed it advisable to mitigate the rigours of his captivity, and to allow both him and his son as much liberty as was thought consistent with his object of preventing his services being made available to his enemies.

In the mean time, the weakness that was caused by these dissensions in the kingdom of Naples afforded to the pope an opportunity of regaining his lost ground, and opened to Braccio Montone one of improving his fortune. The news of the death of Ladislaus was tidings of great joy to the inhabitants of Rome, Florence, and the intermediate towns. It was said that many of them lifted up their hands to heaven to show their gratitude for such an unexpected deliverance; and after the departure of Sforza, several cities, which had been taken by him, voluntarily returned to the allegiance of the Holy See. For the purpose of retaining these cities in his possession, John XXIII. appointed Braccio, whose abilities he knew how to value, to the governorship of Bologna, the principal one among them. Braccio, while he remained in that city, availed himself of his position to carry on thence operations against the other towns in the neighbourhood; and on the deposition of Pope John, in the following year, he consented to relinquish the post which that pontiff had intrusted to

him, on receiving a sum of money from the anti-papal party. He then immediately attacked the city of Perugia, the possession of which seems to have been his principal object of ambition through life; and after having completely defeated the army of Malatesta, the general of the Perugians, he succeeded in making himself master, not only of their city, but also of Todi, Narni, and several other towns in the mountains between Florence and Rome. To dignify Perugia with the appearance of a capital, and to reconcile the inhabitants to his rule, he tried to make all the other places which he had conquered pay a tribute to it, and celebrated his victories by a magnificent tournament. In the year 1417 he marched thence into Rome, and soon took possession of that city, with the exception of the Castle of St Angelo. Having assumed the title of Defender of the Holy See, he appointed a new senator, and continued to remain in the Eternal City under the pretence of awaiting the arrival of the pope. With the view of augmenting his power, and securing himself in his possessions, he got the other renowned condottieri of the time, including Tartaglia and several of the relations of Sforza, to serve under him. The enmity which the former bore to Sforza had been in noways mitigated by the length of time that had elapsed since its origin, or by the many battles they had fought in common; and Braccio, to his shame be it spoken, gave him permission and encouragement, while in his service, to attack and pillage the cities of his rival, then a captive at Naples. The family of the Attendoli had

already bound themselves to protect the fiefs of their imprisoned kinsman; but of those who were in the service of Braccio, Michael alone had the courage to refuse to be in any way a party to such an act of perfidy, and withdrew from the captain who sanctioned such a disgraceful proceeding. Braccio's conduct on this occasion was the cause of the hostility which prevailed between him and Sforza till the end of their careers.

CHAPTER III.

SFORZA LIBERATED BY THE QUEEN—DRIVES BRACCIO FROM ROME.—FIRST APPEARANCE OF FRANCESCO SFORZA IN ACTION—HIS MARRIAGE—ADVICE GIVEN TO HIM BY HIS FATHER.—SFORZA ANNOYED BY CARACCIOLI'S INTRIGUES—IS DEFEATED BY BRACCIO—FORMS A PARTY WITH LOUIS OF ANJOU AGAINST THE QUEEN OF NAPLES—LAYS SIEGE TO NAPLES.—JOAN PROCURES THE ASSISTANCE OF ALPHONSO OF ARAGON—WHO LANDS IN ITALY AND TAKES BRACCIO INTO HIS SERVICE.—FRANCESCO SFORZA MADE VICEROY OF CALABRIA.—SFORZA ATTENDOLO HANGS TARTAGLIA.—MEETING AND EXPLANATIONS OF BRACCIO AND SFORZA.—SFORZA RE-ENTERS THE SERVICE OF JOAN OF NAPLES.—INTRIGUES OF ALPHONSO.—JOAN ADOPTS LOUIS OF ANJOU.—CRITICAL SITUATION AND SAGACIOUS CONDUCT OF FRANCESCO SFORZA.—DEPARTURE OF ALPHONSO.—BRACCIO LAYS SIEGE TO AQUILA.—SFORZA CALLED TO RELIEVE IT—IS DROWNED IN ATTEMPTING TO CROSS THE PESCARA.—DEFEAT AND DEATH OF BRACCIO.

THE tide of fortune, which seemed to have set against Sforza Attendolo, soon again turned in his favour. Ere long a fresh revolution broke out at Naples. The chief men of that kingdom, who had been so eager to hail Jacques of Bourbon as king, soon found that they had gained nothing by a change of rulers. They had the mortification of seeing the affairs of their nation managed entirely by the countrymen of the king, and of beholding the courtiers of France preferred to all posts of honour before themselves. If the favourites of the queen were worthless and despicable, they were at least their countrymen, and were to them more tolerable than the foreign minions of Jacques. Actuated by these opinions, they soon restored Joan to her former

dignity, and expelled her husband from the city. The queen, having regained her power, lost no time in liberating Sforza and his son: the former she restored to all his dignities and fiefs, and she made young Francesco count of three cities, as a compensation for the loss of Tricarico, which had been given to him by Ladislaus, and taken from him by Jacques.

Joan's jealousy, and even her apprehensions for the safety of her realm, had naturally been excited by the position of Braccio at Rome, and she proposed to Sforza to undertake an expedition for the purpose of driving him thence. Burning as he was with desire to punish the treacherous behaviour of his ancient brother in arms, he eagerly availed himself of this opportunity of doing so; and having, not without some difficulty, got together an army, he soon arrived in the plains of the Campagna, south of the Eternal City. Here he tried to bring his adversary to battle; but he could not, either by his taunts or his artifices, induce him to relinquish his usual mode of tactics. To the sanguine temperament of Sforza this delay was intolerable. He therefore determined to cross the Tiber, and to attack his enemy from the Castle of St Angelo, which still held out against him. For this purpose he brought his army over on a bridge of boats near Ostia. As soon as all his troops had landed, he destroyed this bridge, that they might see that their only chance of safety was in victory. His soldiers, though exhausted by the heats of July, and suffering from great scarcity of provisions, followed with the greatest confidence the general who

had so often led them to victory; and he, for his part, ill brooked the delay of one night, which was necessary to recruit and to refresh them on their march from Ostia to Rome. But Braccio, who well knew the superiority of his rival in general engagements, and whose army had already been weakened by the plague, did not await his approach, but fled with great precipitation from Rome by the road to Narni and Perugia. So fearful was he of being pursued that he broke down behind him the Ponte Molle, trusting that the meandering course of the river would protect him while his adversary remained on the northern bank. Thus Sforza entered the Eternal City without any opposition. He shortly afterwards took prisoner one of Braccio's lieutenants, Nicolo Piccinino, who had annoyed him by predatory excursions, and retained him in his army as a hostage for the liberation of his own captive soldiers.

The following winter he had an opportunity of defeating his old adversary Tartaglia. In this engagement, young Francesco Sforza, then only fifteen years old, made great exhibition of his courage. Though then appearing for the first time in battle, he was generally in advance of the veteran soldiers, and engaged hand to hand with the enemy.

After having thus accomplished the designs of his employers, Sforza returned covered with glory to Naples. The queen testified her sense of his merits by adding the important city of Benevento to his other fiefs. At this time also he showed that he was as ready to advance the fortunes of his family by marriage as by

war, and endeavoured to effect a union between his son Francesco and Johanette Stendarda, a connection of the queen's, possessed of the sovereignty of several cities in Apulia, and owner of extensive estates. In this design, however, he was disappointed by the treachery of a friend, who, after having promised him to aid him in his designs, secured the heiress himself; but he soon managed to provide equally well for the fortunes of his house, by obtaining for his son the hand of Polyxena Ruffa, a young lady who, in the words of his biographer, was in possession, not only of all the advantages of beauty, virtue, and nobility, but also of several cities and fertile estates in the province of Calabria.

The advice which Sforza Attendolo gave to his son, when about to start to take possession of his bride, is worthy of notice, as coming from a man who certainly was not dishonest for the period in which he lived, and knew well how to push his fortune in the world; and it must be allowed that, if it was not such as to merit the entire approbation of a strict moralist of the present day, it was at least in many degrees less iniquitous than much of that which one century later Machiavelli gave to those who were desirous of reigning in Italy. After having referred to his past life, and expressed some general wishes for his future welfare, he proceeded to say, "Above all things, I wish you to be assiduous in your observance of justice to everybody. When hereafter you come to rule over people, it will not only recommend you to the favour of heaven, but it will make you especially popular among men. And though you should

observe it in all things, be especially careful not to irritate any of your subjects by the commission of adultery. That is an injury which both the wrath of God and the bitter anger of men punish with the greatest severity."* He then recommended him never to excite the angry passions of any of his generals by a blow; but in case he should so far forget himself as to do so, to have the person whom he so offended removed from access to his person; and concluded by advising him never to get on a horse that had a hard mouth, or that was not sure of foot.

It was not long, however, before Sforza began to be annoyed as formerly by the intrigues of the palace, and the jealousy of the favourites of the queen. After the liberation of her majesty, and the departure of the Count of Tarento, one Caraccioli succeeded to the place that was formerly held by Pandolfo Aleppo, and entertained the same jealousy against the High Constable. However, he did not dare openly to lay hands on him, but endeavoured to raise up enemies against him in his camp, and persuaded a band of armed men to attack him on his march. But the leading men of the kingdom became thoroughly disgusted at these perpetual quarrels between the chamberlain and the general of the queen, and made the two rivals consent to a reconciliation, and shake hands in the presence of royalty.

Her majesty had soon an opportunity of freeing her kingdom from the general who was detested by her chamberlain. Pope Martin V., a member of the noble family of Colonna, who had been elected just three years

* *Leodrisii Cribellii Vita di Sforza.*

after the deposition of John, was at this time sore pressed by the new sovereign of Perugia; and Sforza, with the permission of his former mistress, entered his service, and was dignified with the title of Gonfalonier of the Church. He soon afterwards set out on an expedition against the only man who could dispute with him the palm of military pre-eminence in Italy; and having arrived in the neighbourhood of Viterbo, close to the army of Braccio, he sent to that city for some reinforcements that had been promised him. Braccio managed by an artifice to intercept these reinforcements; and, attacking the enemy with a vastly superior force, gained a complete victory.

Though defeated, Sforza showed as much ability and courage as he ever did in the hour of prosperity. One of his first measures was to send for his son Francesco to assist him—so great an opinion did he entertain of the youth; and with his aid he managed to bring together a considerable army, and took the town of Capito in the presence of his adversary. However, Caraccioli profited by his reverse at Viterbo to undermine him in every possible way at the court of Naples; and though the queen continued ostensibly to befriend the party of the pope, the reigning favourite not only prevented her sending him the promised reinforcements, but even engaged to assist the opposite general with money and troops.

In the mean time, Martin V. had gone to Florence, at the solicitation of the government of the city, for the purpose of entering into negotiations with Braccio; and

he found no difficulty in persuading Sforza, already sufficiently disgusted with the intrigues of Caraccioli, and the inconstancy of the queen, to repair thither for the same purpose. Here it was proposed to bring Louis III. of Anjou into Italy, and to support his claims to the kingdom of Naples; and Sforza, not without considerable hesitation, and a great show of reluctance, consented to become a party to the project. The negotiations which the pontiff managed to conclude with Braccio were sufficiently advantageous to himself. It was agreed that that warrior should restore to him the towns of Narni, Terni, Orvieto, and Orta; but should be allowed to hold, as fiefs of the Holy See, Perugia, and several of the surrounding cities. In return for this, Braccio promised to expel Galeazzo Bentivoglio from Bologna, and to bring that city under the dominion of the pope—all which he performed in the course of the same year.

Sforza, when he had made up his mind as to the part which he was to take, lost no time in carrying his projects into execution. Having marched to Naples at the head of an army, he sent word to the queen that the intrigues of Caraccioli made it impossible for him to continue in her service, and at the same time resigned into her hands the baton of high constable of the kingdom. He then proclaimed Louis of Anjou king of Naples, in virtue of the adoption of his ancestor by the first queen Joan; and having invited all the partisans of the French cause, of whom there were not a few in the kingdom, to join him, he invested the city by the side

of the gate which leads to Capua. While here, he was much distressed in his mind, and crippled in his operations, from the circumstance of his son Francesco being for a considerable time disabled by a severe wound. At the same time they were both afflicted by the death of Polyxena, the wife of the latter; and, as was usual at that period, there were many sinister reports of her having been carried off by poison. However grievous her loss may have been to young Francesco, it was not to be deemed an unlucky event in his career, that the death of the wife who had brought him a considerable accession of territory left him so soon at liberty to use the same means for improving his fortunes.

Meantime the queen was not slow to find an adversary well capable of opposing this new claimant to her throne. Her ambassador at Rome, Antonio Caraffa, who, from his proficiency in diplomatic deceit, was surnamed "Malizia," had discovered the designs of the pontiff, and thereon entered into negotiations with Alphonso V., king of Sicily, Aragon, Majorca, and Sardinia, and the descendant of Manfred and Constance, and proposed that that monarch should undertake the defence of the queen, on condition of being declared her heir. This proposal, it is almost needless to say, was unhesitatingly accepted by the King of Aragon; and with the view of performing his part of it he arrived before Naples with a considerable fleet, in a very short time after Sforza had been joined by Louis of Anjou. The combined forces of the two latter were unable to prevent the King of Aragon from effecting a

landing; but when he attempted to drive them from their position before the walls of the city, they repulsed his troops with great loss. It was said that the Aragonese monarch, during the course of the engagement, got a prisoner to point out Sforza to him, and that he was much struck by his personal bravery and his omnipresence in the battle; and expressed his admiration of his person and courage in somewhat the same terms that were used by Priam on beholding the Grecian heroes from his own city walls,* or by Aladdin on seeing Tancred from those of Jerusalem.† And the sample he here had of his fighting convinced him of the necessity of opposing to him his great rival.

Braccio, after the conclusion of the negotiations at Florence in 1418, had retired to his newly acquired principality at Perugia, and employed himself chiefly in the embellishment of his capital. He, however, was easily persuaded to leave these peaceful recreations for the avocation to which he had been used; and in the following spring he entered the Neapolitan territories with an army. On his arrival at the capital, he was received with marked distinction by the queen and her adopted heir, and created Prince of Capua, Count of Foggia, and High Constable of the kingdom, an office which had become vacant by the resignation of Sforza. In the mean time Sforza had retired for winter quarters to Aversa, a town in the immediate vicinity of Naples. While there, he formally renounced all claim to the town of Monteculo, with a view of facilitating nego-

* *Iliad*, iii. † *Ger. Lib.* iii. 18.

tiations between Nicholas of Este and the duke of Milan. The loss of the city, the first that he had held, could not have been of much importance to him, now that he had become lord of so many; and he received more than compensation for it in the dignities that were conferred upon his son. Louis, duly appreciating the talents of that youth, sent him to Calabria, the part of the kingdom of Naples where his influence was greatest, with the title of Viceroy. Here he showed himself well deserving of the confidence reposed in him; and the party of Anjou gained considerably by the ability and talent which he displayed. He reduced several towns to the obedience of his employer, and won for his cause the goodwill of the chief men of the province.

The advance of the spring was the signal for the renewal of hostilities between Braccio and Sforza. The campaign, however, was not attended with any decisive result. The latter, as usual, tried every means to bring his adversary to a general action, which the former assiduously avoided, and sought to get what advantage he could by manœuvring, by fighting with detachments, and by treachery. He is even said to have entered into negotiations with Tartaglia, who had been despatched to the assistance of Sforza by the pope, for the murder of his adversary. Whether this is true or not, it is certain that he endeavoured to corrupt the officers in the opposite camp; and Tartaglia, the unrelenting enemy of Sforza, lent a ready ear to his proposals of treachery. The perfidious conduct of the latter, however, was dis-

covered, and he paid the penalty of his treachery on the gibbet at Aversa.

In the mean time, Louis of Anjou had retired to Rome. The indecisive nature of the campaign, and the protracted difficulties of accomplishing a design, the reported facility of which had brought him at a most inconvenient time from his hereditary dominions, seemed to have inspired him with disgust; nor were the other parties less tired of a war by which they got nothing. Braccio was more anxious to strengthen his power, and to extend his newly-acquired dominions, than to fight the battles of the queen; Sforza was embarrassed by the failure of Louis and Martin to supply him with money; Joan had already begun to show symptoms of jealousy towards her adopted successor, and was desirous, under any terms, to be rid of a rival whose armies occupied one of the fairest provinces in her dominions. Under these circumstances they all readily consented to the cessation of hostilities proposed by the pope. Braccio was glad to be reconciled to his ancient brother in arms, and to return to Perugia; the queen also was willing to reinstate in her service the former high constable of the realm.

The most graphic descriptions have been preserved to us of the first meeting and reconciliation of the two great captains who had so often been enemies and friends.* The first overture was made by Sforza, who entered the camp of Braccio attended by only fifteen unarmed followers. There he represented to his

* *Leodrisii Crebellii vita di Sforza.*

adversary the futility of carrying on a war by which neither of them could gain much, but both might suffer considerable losses. He admitted the difficulties in which he himself was placed, being no longer supported by the pope or Louis of Anjou, and used every argument to show that peace was generally desirable for both parties. The readiness with which Braccio consented to his propositions showed that he also thought with him as to the expediency of peace. After having gone through all the forms of a reconciliation, the two condottieri entered into explanations of their past differences, and freely criticised each other's conduct in war. Braccio frankly admitted his secret negotiations previous to the battle of Viterbo, as also those which in the last war he had carried on with the traitor Tartaglia. Sforza, on the other hand, declared that he had never attempted to gain any advantage over his adversary by any underhand dealing whatever, and that he never would have ceased to regard him as a friend, if, during the period of his captivity, he had not permitted and encouraged Tartaglia to attack his cities. He concluded by saying that his spirits were now as much elated, by his reconciliation with his former friend, as his feelings had been wounded on the occasion alluded to. After these explanations had been concluded, Braccio is said to have expressed his admiration and surprise at two traits he had invariably witnessed in the conduct of his opponent. The first was, that whenever his army was drawn up in line of battle, he would on no account suffer it to retreat, but would continue fighting under

every prospect of disadvantage; whilst he himself, on the contrary, took every account of times, situations, contingencies, and risks, and always thought it better to desist in any enterprise than to be defeated. The second was, that he seemed too great a protector of the country people, and too great a disciplinarian in his army, for that he punished with too great severity the offences of the soldiers against the rustics—a mode of acting very different from the true policy of a condottiere, who ought to try to allure men to his service by every prospect of license. In reply to these observations, Sforza is said to have reminded him, in a jocular manner, of the different devices by which, when they were in the camp of Alberic, their colours were distinguished; that his device of broad straight folds might be regarded as an emblem of his rule of conduct, both in the camp and in the common affairs of life; that he was willing to stake the reputation of his name on his adoption of it, and to leave it as a model to be followed by his successor. With regard to the second characteristic of his conduct, he had never yet had reason to repent of the observance of justice towards everybody; and he was uncertain whether he would deem it the greater glory to be termed the bravest or the justest of generals, since, without the latter qualification, it was impossible either to manage the affairs of mankind or to perform the duties required by God. Having concluded these explanations, they are said to have remained a considerable time in private conversation, in the course of which it was agreed that Braccio should

despatch letters to the Queen of Naples, entreating her to take Sforza into her favour again.

Braccio, having performed his part, returned to Perugia, to set the affairs of his kingdom in order; and Sforza proceeded to make his peace with her majesty. She had accepted the mediation of Braccio, and consented to restore Sforza to the office he had formerly held; but, on going through the ceremony of presenting him with the baton of constable, she was unable to avoid making a joke at his expense. Some difference having arisen among her ministers about the form of the inaugural oath, she exclaimed, "Let Sforza himself decide; he has made so many oaths to myself, and to my enemies, that nobody knows better than he in what manner people bind themselves by engagements, and afterwards loose themselves from the same."

The subsequent events of the very year in which this reconciliation had taken place showed that, in the then state of Italy, it was vain to expect either peace in the kingdom of an intriguing and childless woman, or an alliance between two rival military adventurers. The friendship of the latter seemed like the coalition of oil and vinegar when poured into the same vessel. Scarcely had Louis consented to relinquish his claims on Naples when the adopted heir of the queen showed himself anxious to anticipate the course of nature, and to exercise during her lifetime the functions of sovereignty. To effect this more easily, he is said to have formed a plan for seizing the person of Sforza, after he had enticed him on board his own ship. Whatever truth

there may have been in these allegations, the supporters of the queen were filled with joy when they beheld him safe landed at Gaëta; and rumours were prevalent that the execution of this design was merely hindered by the delay consequent on the dissensions that had arisen among the partisans of the King of Aragon. The suspicions of the queen's friends became so general that she deemed it advisable to adopt measures not to be taken off her guard in the event of their turning out to be true; and with this view she reinstated Sforza in greater favour than before, and solicited his protection, should circumstances require. Even the courtier Carracioli saw that the services of the veteran were absolutely necessary for the independence of the mistress in the sunshine of whose favour he was basking; and he, for a time, was obliged to forget or dissemble his former animosities, and to enter into the closest alliance with his ancient rival. It was agreed by the warrior, the queen, and the courtier, that if Alphonso did not behave himself to their satisfaction, Louis of Anjou was to be adopted in his place. After this Sforza retired to Villa Franca for winter quarters.

On the opening of the following year, 1424, which was destined to terminate the careers of the two great captains of the age, the designs of Alphonso of Aragon were made manifest. His first act was to engage Braccio da Montone to lay siege on his own account to Aquila, a fortified town which, from its contiguity to his newly-formed principality of Perugia, might be deemed a valuable acquisition thereto. Having thus,

as he thought, turned to that quarter the attention of those whom he was about to make his enemies, he himself marched to Capua, thinking that, if he was once master of the person of the queen and her favourite, there would be little to prevent the execution of his plans. He managed to seize the latter before he was aware of his danger; but the former, having got intimation of his design, had the fortress prepared to stand a siege, and despatched messengers to Sforza to come to her assistance. On his way thither, Sforza was met by the ambassadors of Alphonso, who reminded him that he was bound by the same treaty of friendship and alliance towards their master as towards the queen, and endeavoured to procure his services for him by the representation of the superior advantages which would accrue to himself thereby, and by the most liberal offers of reward. Sforza, however, either thinking that he would be more powerful as commander of the forces in the service of a woman, than in that of a monarch well skilled in the arts of war—or, it may be, from principles of honour and friendship for the queen—replied that he had promised allegiance to Joan and Alphonso when they were acting together as mother and son; that on the present occasion he had received orders from the former which he was determined to obey; that he, for his part, was truly grieved at the dissensions between his patrons, and at the ingratitude of the adopted son of the queen. On the receipt of this answer, Alphonso continued to press the siege with greater vigour than ever. Sforza came up with his

army and compelled him to give him battle in the plains of Formella, almost beneath the walls of Capua. The engagement, though contested with the greatest obstinacy and skill, and with many turns in the favour of both parties, terminated in the complete defeat of the Aragons, and the consequent liberation of the queen from her critical position. The affairs of the former were, however, retrieved by the arrival of a fleet from Aragon, unexpected by both parties alike; and, in spite of the diligence of Sforza, a considerable force landed and entered the city of Naples. The number of the invading host was so great, and their position was so formidable, that Sforza and Carracioli did not deem it safe for the queen to remain at Capua, and sent her under the protection of a strong escort to Aversa. In this position of affairs, it was agreed by Joan and her two counsellors that the adopted son of the former had shown himself utterly unworthy of the favour that had been conferred on him, and that her old enemy, Louis of Anjou, should be substituted in his place. Letters to this effect were despatched to the pope, and to many of the crowned heads of Europe. Thus, in the short space of a year, a new combination of parties was formed among those whom mutual distrust, or never-ceasing ambition and conflicting interests, would not permit to remain at peace: so little did treaties and protestations of mutual friendship avail in an age when wars were justified by expediency, and oaths were reckoned binding only as long as it suited the mutual convenience of the parties to observe them.

In the beginning of this campaign, an event occurred which exhibited to great advantage the genius of Francesco Sforza, and gave proof how well he was qualified to occupy the position that was so shortly to become vacant by the death of his father. The young viceroy, then only in his twenty-third year, had been despatched into Calabria, accompanied by several condottieri of minor note, who had sworn fidelity to his father, and were generally supposed, from private friendship and length of service, to be attached to him. While he was manœuvring in the face of the enemy, the majority of these captains, terrified by a report of the death of the elder Sforza, which had been industriously spread in the camp, and possibly also allured by the gold of Alphonso, came to a determination to quit his service, and to pass over to the opposite party. When their designs were fully prepared, they announced their intentions to Francesco; and he, surprised, though in no way intimidated by their behaviour, merely requested them to make a semblance of remaining with him as long as he continued in front of the enemy. In the mean time, he despatched messengers to one Loysius Sanseverinas, a condottiere of some note, who happened to be close at hand, as also to his father, informing them of his situation. The former immediately marched to his assistance, and he was shortly afterwards joined by a considerable force under the command of his uncle, Michael Attendolo, who was sent to him by the latter. With these reinforcements he managed to attack his adversaries almost before they were aware of his

approach, and, after a complete victory, to make prisoners of the majority of those who, a short time before, had so shamefully deserted him. In the hour of triumph, his behaviour was remarkable for moderation and good sense. Intelligence of the victory of his son had been conveyed without delay to the elder Sforza, and he despatched messengers with orders that no mercy should be shown to the traitors who were then in his hands. On receipt of these commands, so repugnant to his own feelings, and to the general practice of his father, the young man is said to have asked the bearer of them how his parent looked when he delivered them. On his being told that he was violently enraged at the time, Francesco replied that he could not regard the words that had been spoken in anger in the light of an order; after which he had the captives brought into his presence, and informed them that both he and his father granted them a free pardon, and gave them the option of remaining in his service or not, as they pleased. The conduct of his son, by which so many lives were spared, and the services of so many able generals secured, is said to have given such satisfaction to the elder Sforza that he exclaimed with tears of joy, that his child was a much cleverer man than himself!

In the mean time, Alphonso, disgusted at the small progress that his cause was making, and embarrassed by troubles at home, departed for his native kingdom of Aragon. While on his way thither, he pillaged and set fire to the city of Marseilles, the property of his adversary; and even carried his malice so far as to

take with him thence the bones of St Louis, and many of the sacred vessels from the churches. Though he had left at Naples his brother, Don Pedro of Aragon, along with several condottieri, the queen deemed herself freed from all immediate danger in that quarter, and despatched Sforza to the relief of Aquila, which Braccio continued to besiege without any intermission.

On this the last occasion on which the two rival condottieri were to be opposed, each made an eminent display of the tactics for which he had been conspicuous through life. Sforza was ever anxious to fight and to conquer; Braccio watched every opportunity to steal an advantage over his adversary. Sforza's design was to bring his opponent to battle; Braccio's endeavour was to throw every possible impediment in the way of his advance. Though it has been the invariable practice of Italian warfare to retire from the field in the winter, the former collected all his forces in the middle of December, and marched directly against the enemy. The latter having brought together a portion of his troops from their winter quarters, took positions in the different towns and strongholds in front of his adversary's line of march; and though not daring to come to an engagement, caused him no small delay, and often led him a fruitless pursuit from place to place. By this means he hoped to gain sufficient time to render himself master of the city, whose inhabitants were already suffering the severest privations. After the manœuvring had lasted nearly one month, Sforza found himself with his army at Ortona, while his enemy was at Chieti, a city on the

high-road between his own headquarters and Aquila. Sforza, impatient of delay, determined on marching along the coast, and crossing the river Pescara close to its mouth, which would enable him to turn his enemy's position at Chieti, and march straight upon Aquila without farther opposition. Braccio, true to his policy, and well acquainted with the tactics of the man with whom he had to deal, had placed a small body of men in the town of Pescara, a little way above the mouth of the river, and had fortified its banks with a palisade, behind which he had placed several men armed with cross-bows. These obstructions were such that few men, except the general whose forward mode of fighting was denoted by the folds on his military colours, would have persevered in the attempt.

The 4th of January 1424 was chosen by Sforza for his hazardous undertaking. There are many reports extant of omens of ill-luck having appeared to him before the commencement of this day, which was destined to terminate his career. Some of these may possibly have been invented after the tragic event had taken place; trivial incidents, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been forgotten, may have been recorded and exaggerated, or may have made an impression upon those of his followers who had less heart for the enterprise than himself; and it is not improbable that visions may have been conjured up by the imagination of Sforza himself, intent upon his enterprise, and fully aware of its danger. After having, as was his custom, performed the ceremony of mass, and taken the sacra-

ment before daybreak, he is said to have related, that while he lay awake at night there appeared to him the head of a man of gigantic stature, and that he afterwards had a vision of himself struggling in the current, and vainly imploring assistance. Before starting, he was reminded of the prediction of an astrologer, that he should, above all things, beware of crossing a river on a Monday, and implored by his companions in arms not to despise such evident indications of the will of the Almighty. Nor did the circumstance of the horse of one of the standard-bearers having fallen fail to produce its due effect on the minds of the superstitious and timid among his followers.

When he arrived at the river he found that the elements, as well as his enemy, had rendered the passage more than usually difficult, as, besides the preparations before mentioned, made by Braccio, a strong east wind had set in, and caused a sort of conflict between the current of the river and the waves of the sea. But he, as little daunted by the reality as he had been by the visions of danger, gave orders to the foremost men in his army to cross the river by the shallows adjoining the beach. Five of the best-mounted men in the army dashed into the stream, trusting to the strength of their heavy armour to defend them against the javelins and cross-bows of the enemy: after them came young Francesco Sforza, followed by his father. Notwithstanding the opposition of the enemy, aided by the wind, the waves, and the sea, they all effected a safe landing on the northern bank of the Pescara, and their

success emboldened others to follow their example. Already had fortune begun to declare in favour of the brave. Forty of the best men in the camp had arrived in safety after the Sforzas. The bowmen, who had been placed behind the palisades, having fled in terror to the city, brought word to the garrison of Braccio that they had been unable to defend the passage of the river, and entreated them to attack the enemy before they had landed in considerable numbers. Already a party had come from the city for that purpose, but they were unable to stand the onset of a small number of heavily-armed knights, headed by Francesco Sforza; and a great number of them were made prisoners before they could reach the walls of the city. In the moment of his exultation, the elder Sforza beckoned to his followers on the southern bank to lose no time in crossing the river to assist in following up their success; and impatient of delay, he dashed into the water, determined to return again to the other side and lead the way for the timid or the doubtful. But on this occasion, the wind, which is said to rule the waves of the Adriatic, showed itself a more formidable enemy than the bowmen of Braccio.* The waves which it continued to raise met the flow of the river with redoubled violence; the heavy armour of the warrior and the increased conflict of the waters were too much for the horse, which had already had some hours of exercise. Sforza, while in the middle of the passage, stooped for-

* "Auster
Quo non arbiter Adriæ,
Major." *Hor.* lib. i. ode 3.

ward to extend his hand to one of his soldiers, who, being dismounted, seemed to be in danger of being carried off by the current; the animal lost his balance, slipped behind, and precipitated his steel-clad rider into the dangerous eddy. The horse, freed from his burden, swam to the bank. The warrior was unable to struggle with the billows. Twice were his steel-clad hands seen raised above the waters, clasped together, as if he were imploring assistance, though any words that he may have attempted to utter were choked by the rage of the elements; after which he sank to rise no more, and his body was never afterwards found. Thus perished Sforza Attendolo of Cotignola, a man who, in the words of the historian of the Italian republics, was universally acknowledged to be one of the first generals and politicians of the day.

At the moment of this catastrophe Francesco Sforza was beneath the walls of Pescara, engaged in the close pursuit of the enemy. Never did the genius of the future duke of Milan appear more conspicuous than on the receipt of the mournful intelligence. Though tenderly attached to his father, and belonging to a nation who feel more keenly the passions of grief or joy than the colder inhabitants of the north, he never for one moment lost his presence of mind. His first object was to endeavour to secure for himself the army, who were released from their engagements by the death of their leader, and whose fidelity, at all times uncertain, seemed more doubtful than ever, now that they were opposed to one who had no rival left in military science.

With this object in view, he immediately recalled his cavalry from the pursuit of the enemy, and led them back to the fords of the river, under the pretence of rendering assistance to the others in the dangers of the passage. While crossing the water himself, he gave an example of that devoted attachment to his companions in arms which had cost his father his life. On beholding some of his men in danger of being carried out into the deep, he dismounted, and entered into a small and fragile punt which was lying near the mouth of the river, and which he guided about with one oar, so as to render assistance to many. When he had assembled around him, on the southern side of the fatal stream, the chief men among the followers of his deceased father, he laid before them, in strong and forcible language, the true state of their affairs, reminding them of the riches and renown they had attained under his sire, representing to them their prospect of success if they attached themselves to him, and the contempt they could not fail to bring upon themselves should they, in the present emergency, go over to the enemy. The words of Francesco, aided, it may be, by his already well-established reputation, and the vivid recollection of his conduct when deserted in Calabria, prevailed; they all promised fidelity to the young chief, and expressed their readiness to assist him in securing for himself the inheritance of his parent. After this he lost no time in marching at the head of his troops to Benevento, which he regarded as the most important of the fiefs of his father, and afterwards visited in the same manner

nearly all the other cities that had at different times been allotted to him. Having thus secured to himself the allegiance of his troops and his subjects, he proceeded to Aversa, and there made tender of his services to the queen.

The report of the death of Sforza was brought to Braccio after the intelligence of his partial success at the Pescara had made him resolve upon relinquishing the siege of Aquila. In those days the casualties of war were so rare among the chief of the condottieri that he was at first utterly incredulous; but when no longer able to feel any doubt on the subject, he is said, so far from evincing any tokens of joy at an occurrence by which his prospects of success were so enhanced, to have actually betrayed many symptoms of sorrow for the fate of one who for so many years had been his brother and rival in arms, and at the same time to have expressed a presentiment that he should not long survive him. After this he continued the siege of Aquila as before, under the expectation that the disappointment of all hopes of assistance from Sforza would soon induce the inhabitants to capitulate. But they dreaded nothing so much as falling under the dominion of the tyrant of Perugia; and as they did not despair of further assistance from the queen of Naples, they continued to hold out with a fortitude worthy of a better age.

In the mean time the affairs of Joan had taken a still more prosperous turn. An alliance had been formed between Louis of Anjou and the duke of Milan,

and the latter had engaged the Genoese to send a fleet to expel their old enemies, the Aragonese, from Naples. After they had driven them from the adjoining maritime towns, they drew up in front of the capital, while Francesco Sforza commenced an attack thereon by land. The fidelity of the condottieri in the service of Don Pedro had already been shaken by the unpropitious state of the Aragonese affairs; some of them had before this left him to take service under Braccio; and the chief man amongst them, Jacobo Caldora, having no wish to encounter danger in support of a falling cause, entered into treaty with the party of the queen, and opened the gates of the city to Francesco Sforza. It now remained for Joan to complete her triumph, by relieving her faithful subjects of Aquila; and she despatched an army for that purpose, under the command of Caldora, accompanied by Sforza.

The tactics of Braccio on this, the closing scene of his life, are worthy of notice. He seemed to think himself certain of victory, now that he was no longer opposed by his former rival. So confident was he on this occasion, that, although he knew the forces of his adversaries to be three times as numerous as his own, he sent word to the enemy that, if they would come and attack him in the plains in front of Aquila, he would not oppose their passage through the mountain passes of St Larrent. To one of the messages, young Francesco is said to have replied, that he would soon come, to his cost. On the 4th of June 1424, the army of Caldora set out to cross these extremely difficult passes; and though a

mere handful of men might at any time have arrested their progress, Braccio, true to his promise, offered them no opposition whatever. In descending the mountains, the cavalry were obliged to dismount and lead their horses down the steep and stony paths which conducted to the foot, and could arrive but in small numbers at a time in the plain beneath. Nevertheless, the whole army was allowed to assemble before the attack was begun. The plain in which the battle was to be fought had recently been inundated by the overflow of the river, and offered every impediment to the action of heavy cavalry after the fatigues of the passage of the mountain; and as the steepness of the path precluded all possibility of retreat in the event of a defeat, it is not improbable that Braccio hoped that, if he suffered them all to descend, the whole force would fall into his hands. At the beginning of the battle this expectation seemed likely to be fulfilled. The troops of Caldora, fatigued by the labours of the morning, and unnerved by the perilous situation in which they had been so long exposed, gave way at the first onset. Victory seemed almost in his hands; but the troops of Braccio had, in the eagerness of pursuit, come upon an unbroken body of infantry belonging to Sforza: many horses of the former were killed, and a great number of them driven back in confusion. Niccolo Piccinino, one of Braccio's most promising pupils, anxious to restore the battle to its former success, brought his men from the post where they had been placed by their commander-in-chief to prevent the egress of the

inhabitants of Aquila; and the citizens immediately profited by the advantage thus given them, to sally forth upon the rear of the army that had besieged them so long. To add to the confusion of Braccio, his signals was either unseen or unheeded by a reserve body of men whom he had placed at some distance with the intention of bringing them up in the hour of victory; and his army, pressed both behind and before, was obliged to give way. All accounts represent this engagement as being different from the almost bloodless battles that were so often fought between the condottieri in the fifteenth century. The soldiers of Caldora well knew that, if defeated, they had no chance of retreat; their adversaries were maddened with disappointment; and the general, who had his own ambitious objects in view, sacrificed the lives of his men with less reluctance than if he had been fighting the battles of a neighbouring prince.

Young Francesco was everywhere in the thickest part of the engagement. Braccio, on first seeing him, asked "Who is that man with the black cockade whom I behold wherever I turn my eyes?" and, on being informed, he exclaimed, "A worthy son of the great Sforza!" Francesco, at the close of the engagement, eagerly pursued the old rival of his father, as if anxious to have the honour of capturing him himself. The latter had cast away his helmet, to prevent his being identified, and met with his death-wound from one of Sforza's knights, who afterwards took him prisoner. The great captain, when in his enemy's hands, refused all sustenance or

comfort. Ere long he expired a captive in the camp of his adversary.

The principality which Braccio had formed was completely destroyed by his defeat at Aquila. All the towns which he had held in the Territories of the Church, including his own capital of Perugia, returned to the allegiance of the pope. Capua, and the other fiefs that had been given to him in the kingdom of Naples, reverted to the queen. His son, Count Oddo, was allowed to retain nothing but the castle of Montone. On the other hand, Francesco Sforza, having secured both the dominions and the reputation of his father, retired to the town of Acqua Pendente, to meditate plans for the future.

BOOK THIRD.

LIFE OF FRANCESCO SFORZA, FROM THE DEATH OF BRACCIO TILL HIS MARRIAGE WITH THE DAUGHTER OF FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI.

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CHAPTER I.

SITUATION OF FRANCESCO SFORZA.—REVIEW OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF ITALY.—CHARACTER OF ITS SOVEREIGNS.—FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI, DUKE OF MILAN—EARLY STRUGGLES AND SUCCESSES.—CAUSES OF WAR BETWEEN THE DUKE OF MILAN AND THE FLORENTINES.—FRANCESCO SFORZA SOUGHT AFTER BY BOTH PARTIES—JOINS THE DUKE OF MILAN.—LEAGUE FORMED AGAINST FILIPPO MARIA.—CAPTURE OF BRESCIA BY THE VENETIANS.—TEMPORARY CESSATION AND RENEWAL OF HOSTILITIES.—VENETIANS SEND A FLEET UP THE PO—INDECISIVE ACTION.—DEFEAT OF MILANESE NEAR MACLO.—PEACE.

THE soul of Gernando, one of the heroes of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* of Tasso, was not more intent upon doing great deeds * than was that of Francesco Sforza during his stay at Acqua Pendente. The crusader, as well as the condottiere, was more ambitious of honour

* "A magnanime imprese ha intenta l'alma,
Ed insolite cose oprar dispone,
Gir fra nemici; ivi o cupresso o palma
Acquistar per la fede ond' e' campione,
Scorrer l' Egitto, e penetrar fin dove
Fuor d' incognito fonte il Nilo muove."

than covetous of gold. But the former sought after the empty glory of a name; the mere renown of deeds of heroism performed, as he thought, in the cause of his religion, was sufficient for him. The latter had in view the more solid honours of fiefs, dukedoms, and kingdoms. To be celebrated as a hero was the darling wish of the former; to reign was the actuating passion of the latter. The former was willing to seek fame by traversing remote parts of the world, or discovering the hidden sources of rivers; the latter confined his views to the Peninsula south of the Alps.

It must be allowed that Italy, in its then state, presented a fair field of enterprise to one who had learned the arts of war in the camp of Sforza Attendolo, and those of intrigue in the court of Joan II. Indeed, most of its states were rotten to the heart's core. The monarchs of the south, for several generations, had been abandoned to vice, and failed to inspire their subjects with respect or affection; and the evil effects of generations of misrule were aggravated by the profligacy and weakness so conspicuous in their then representative. She was without children, and her kingdom was torn in pieces by the civil wars of those who were contending for, or anticipating the rights of, succession. The Neapolitan subjects were not less enervated than their rulers, and the whole kingdom was falling into that state of social dissolution which causes the disappearance of public and private virtues alike, and extinguishes all great hopes and thoughts for the future.* Nor were

* Sismondi, *Republiques Italiennes*, vol. iv. cap. 17.

the States of the Church, if this denomination could be still given to the provinces that had been assigned by Charlemagne and Otho to the bishops of Rome, in a more vigorous condition. The semi-feudal semi-anarchical spirit, which one hundred and twenty years ago had made the heads of the Catholic religion fix their residence at Avignon, still continued. Order had in no way been restored by their return to the city of the Cæsars. The authority of every one who had been put into the pontifical chair, since Gregory XI., had been disputed by an anti-pope. It was long since these states had had any chief to unite them in any bond of union, or inspire them with any common sentiment. The different parcels of territory into which they were separated, by mountains and by rivers, were at the mercy of any one who was strong enough to gain and to keep possession of them. The northern parts of the province of Romagna were always coveted, and often possessed, by the Visconti; its southern parts had fallen under the dominion of the monarchs of Naples; the cities in the fastnesses of the mountains, as well as those between the Apennines and the Adriatic, were ruled by their hereditary tyrants, or by upstart adventurers. In Tuscany, the republics of Sienna and Lucca still continued independent. Florence, indeed, enjoyed some degree of repose from internal dissensions under the rule of the Albizzi; but though she had conquered Pisa, she ceased not to covet possession of Lucca; and the Lucchese themselves were fully determined to maintain their independence. She was also frequently

involved with her neighbouring subjects and allies. In the north, Nicholas, marquis of Este, by far the most respectable of the minor sovereigns of Italy, continued to rule over Ferrara, Modena, and Reggio. Besides him, several of the inferior potentates, whose independence had been almost annihilated by Gian Galeazzo Visconti, had begun to raise their diminished heads. The marquises of Montferrat on one side, and the family of Gonzaga at Mantua, regained their former position; the counts of Savoy were no longer obliged to confine themselves to their dominions north of the Alps; free scope was given to the ambition of the great party chiefs at Parma and Bologna. The Venetians still remained in possession of the territories between the Adriatic and Lake Garda; but they, as well as the aforesaid princes, had become alarmed at the ambition and the successes of Gian Galeazzo Visconti's second son, Filippo Maria.

The character which Dante has given of Guido Montefeltro—

> " L'opere sue
> Non furon leonine ma di volpe:
> Gli accorgimenti e le coperte vie
> Seppe tutte"—

may with justice be applied to this prince. His mode of working was not that of the lion, but the fox. This disposition, which he had in part inherited from his father, had been fostered and developed by his early fortune and education. Galeazzo had ordered his dominions and conquests to be divided between his two sons, Gian Maria and Filippo Maria. The former

was to succeed to the title of Duke of Milan, along with all the territories between the Ticino and the Mincio; the latter, under the title of Count of Pavia, was to inherit all the possessions of his father beyond those rivers. As both were minors at the time of their parent's decease, it was arranged that the government should be intrusted to his widow, Catharine Visconti, till they should come to manhood. In consequence of the weakness and incapacity of the regent, the chief authority in the different provinces was usurped by the condottieri, who had earned their laurels in the armies of Galeazzo. Nothing recorded in history surpasses the cruelty of their rule, or the misery of their subjects. As the young princes advanced in years, these condottieri determined to rule over their lawful sovereigns as well as their dominions; and they often fought among themselves for the favours and patronage of the duke of Milan and the count of Pavia. Of these military tyrants the most ferocious, as well as the most successful, was Facino del Cane, the signor of Alessandria and Vercelli. By making himself master of the person and the states of Filippo Maria, and compelling the elder brother Gian Maria, to put him at the head of his councils, he became the virtual ruler of the whole heritage of the Visconti. But this state did not long continue. By the assassination of Gian Maria, who was killed in a tumult, the ducal dignity devolved upon Filippo Maria; and by the death of Facino del Cane, who was carried off by disease, the young duke was freed from the tyranny to which his brother had been sub-

ject. Though he had till then been a prisoner in the castle of Pavia, he knew how to take the tide of fortune at its turn in his favour. Having been liberated from his confinement, he assumed a haughty tone towards some of his former oppressors, insinuated himself into the favours of the old adherents of Cane, and married his widow and heiress, Beatrice di Tenda. He had no sooner acquired the army and dominions of her late husband than he freed himself from the encumbrance of a wife twenty years older than himself, by putting her to death on a charge of adultery. Having thus made a victim of the person who had helped him to his dukedom, he turned his thoughts to regain and extend the conquests of his father; and he continued to follow this as his object during the whole of his eventful and chequered career.

Not only did the political state of Italy present a fair field of enterprise to Francesco, but the character of its rulers was such as to enhance the value of such services as he was able to perform. The sex of the sovereign of Naples, and the holy calling of the pontiff, made it unfit that they should put themselves at the head of their armies; a curious union of ambition and cowardice in Filippo Maria made the service of the condottieri indispensable to him; and though Florence had gloriously maintained her independence against Galeazzo Visconti, as well as against Ladislaus of Naples—though her merchants were as princes, and her great men among the honoured of the earth, yet every spark of military virtue had been extinguished

with the destruction of her nobility, and she, like the other states, was content to leave to hirelings the carrying out of her plans of conquest, or her defence. The Venetians and Genoese had confined themselves to the sea, till the custom of warring with mercenary troops had become general throughout Italy ; and they probably would have continued to do so, had the carrying on war by land required that their citizens should serve as soldiers, and their chief men as generals. Most of the minor sovereigns of Italy had themselves taken to the profession of arms, and sought for glory and additional dominion in the same manner as young Francesco Sforza. The most remarkable hireling captains of the day, besides Sforza, were Carmagnola, Niccolo Piccinino and Niccolo Fortebraccio—both pupils of Braccio da Montone—Jacobo Caldora, Michael Attendolo, the uncle of Sforza, besides the Malatesta, and several other feudatory lords of Romagna and barons of Rome.

The year after the death of Sforza Attendolo, a war broke out in Italy, which caused the services of his son to be in requisition. Its origin was as follows : Filippo Maria, in pursuance of his object aforementioned, had made himself master of the country between the Adda, the Ticino, and the Alps, and subjugated the different tyrants who, during the minority of himself and his brother, had acquired dominion in the towns of Lower Lombardy. For these successes he had been in no small degree indebted to the talents of Carmagnola, who had attracted his notice when a common soldier, and been promoted to the chief command of his armies.

He then turned his attention to Genoa, a city which, for some time past, had been unable to maintain a fixed government of its own. Though this attack upon the liberties of a neighbouring city was viewed with no small degree of distrust by the Florentine government, the duke gave signal proof of his address, by managing not only to lull their suspicions, but even to persuade them to sign a treaty of alliance with him, in which it was stipulated that they should not meddle in the affairs of Lombardy north of the Panara and the Magra, and that he was to abstain from attempting the conquest of any cities situated to the south of these two rivers. After Genoa had submitted to him in 1421, he made himself master of Domo d'Ossola and Belinzona; and having conquered the whole of the valley of the Levantine from the Swiss, he threatened the states on the Venetian frontier.

The Florentines soon became aware of the error they had committed in trusting the duke. The latter being now lord of all the territory between the heights of the St Gothard and the Gulf of Genoa on one side, and Piedmont and Romagna on the other, could not but seem formidable in the eyes of a people who were, above all things, anxious to preserve the balance of power in Italy. He had already violated the conditions of his treaty in assigning to the ex-doge of Genoa the city of Sarzana, which lay south of the Magra, and by entering into negotiations with the pope's legate at Bologna. But the immediate cause of their rupture was the duke's treacherous occupation of Forli, the

infant prince of which had been committed to his guardianship. On hearing of this, the Florentine people, not without some opposition on the part of Giovanni de' Medici and others, openly declared war against him. Filippo, on his part, seeing the inutility of any further disguise, proceeded to follow up his conquest by sending one of his generals, Agnolo da Pergola, to invest Imola. Having made himself master of that city, the victorious general proceeded to Zagonara, and compelled its tyrant to agree to a surrender within fifteen days, if, in the mean time, he was not succoured by the Florentines. The latter, with the view of saving the place, brought all their available forces under Charles Malatesta against the Milanese general, and attacked him with great promptitude under the walls of the city. But in their anxiety to avoid one disaster, they brought a much greater on their country. Fatigued as the soldiers were with their march of several hours through rain and mud, they were no match for the fresh troops of their adversaries, and, in consequence of their rashness, they sustained a complete defeat, and left their general and a large portion of their army in the hands of the enemy. In this battle, which seemed likely to be decisive of a contest between two of the greatest states in Italy, Machiavelli says that there perished only three men, two of whom had fallen from their horses and were suffocated in the mud.

At Florence the news of this defeat, fraught with danger as it was to its very existence as a state, caused the usual recriminations and exhortations which, in a

city divided into parties, never fail to follow a national calamity. Giovanni de' Medici bade the people look upon his opponents as the cause of all these misfortunes; upbraided them with having listened to their counsels; asked them whether they thought their liberty would have been in greater jeopardy by remaining at peace with the duke than it was now; and reminded the war party of the magnificence of their promises, and the shortcomings of their performances. On the other hand, Rinaldo degli Albizzi, the head of the moderate aristocratical party, exhorted them to be of good cheer; reminded them that, though their misfortunes were great, they had steered the republic through a more dangerous crisis than this; and entreated them to show themselves worthy descendants of the fathers who had so successfully struggled to maintain the independence of their country and the liberties of Italy. Whatever opinion the citizens might have formed as to the prudence of having embarked in a contest with the duke, they were now as determined to make an effort to redeem their misfortunes as their enemy was to continue his career of aggrandisement and success.

Such was the posture of affairs when both the belligerent parties turned their eyes towards the promising son of Sforza Attendolo. Both sent ambassadors to make terms with him at Acqua Pendente. For a time the young soldier seemed uncertain which side he would join; and being anxious to gain leisure to consider, he listened with great courtesy to all, but would make promises to none. At last, however, he determined to

enter into the service of the duke of Milan, for the following reasons. The Florentines, anxious to lose no time in making preparations, had already engaged Oddo, the son of Braccio da Montone, Niccolo Piccinino, the most promising of the pupils of the latter, and Carmagnola, the most successful general of the age, who, on account of some private pique, had quitted the duke's service. It was naturally much more tempting, to a young man of ambition and self-confidence, to seek opportunities of measuring himself with the first generals of the day, than to act either in conjunction with them or under their orders. The commander of the forces was likely to be a much greater man with the duke of Milan than with the republic of Florence. The extensive dominions of the former consisted of a number of cities and provinces united by no common bond of union, and likely enough, on some future occasion, to fall asunder, or to pass, as they had done after the death of Galeazzo Visconti, under the dominion of military adventurers. The latter presented a fairer field for the ambition of a powerful citizen, or a turbulent demagogue, than for that of a mercenary captain. If it was to fall under the dominion of a tyrant, that tyrant must be a native of the state. Add to this, as Sforza possessed extensive fiefs in the kingdom of Naples, it might be advisable for him to secure the good will of the queen; and she was much more likely to approve of his joining a sovereign who was at that time her nominal ally, and whose interests appeared little at variance with her own, than of his attaching himself to a state, part of whose

territory had been conquered by her brother Ladislaus, which she might perhaps hope some future day to regain. Actuated, no doubt, by these considerations, in the summer of the year 1425 Francesco Sforza took service under the duke of Milan, with a body of 1500 cavalry, chiefly composed of old soldiers of his father.

The beginning of the campaign made by the young commander under his new master was not signalised by any brilliant action or decisive result. His first step was to lead the forces placed at his disposal to Flaminia, to act in concert with Guido Torcelli, one of Philip's generals, against Niccolo Piccinino and the Florentines. Thence, after some indecisive manœuvring, he betook himself to Milan, in conformity to the orders of the duke, who wished for an interview with him. On his arrival there, he was received by Philip with marked distinction, and loaded with many favours; and, judging from circumstances, he seems to have made as favourable an impression on him as he had done, when a boy, upon Ladislaus, king of Naples; for the duke, cold and reserved as he was to the majority of men, appeared to love and to prefer him to all others, and already to look upon him almost as a son.* Every day he was more and more struck with his cleverness, his pleasing manners, and excellent mode of expressing himself, as well as with his advantages of person and the dignity of his carriage. He is said even then to have foretold his future eminence. During the whole of his stay at Milan he was honoured among the magnates of the land.

* Simoneta, lib. 2.

In the mean time the tide of adversity continued to press heavily on the Florentines. Their forces were opposed to those of the duke, both in the states of Genoa and Romagna; and in the course of the year 1425 they received no less than four defeats. In addition to this, Niccolo Piccinino, the general to whom they looked above all others as likely to deliver them from their distress, being anxious to found an empire for himself in the neighbourhood of Perugia, had deserted them. Shortly afterwards he passed over to the service of their enemy. But the Florentines of the middle ages, as well as the Romans of yore, might be compared to the oak, which, as it were, gathers fresh sap and vigour from the very axe by which it is hewn down: their continued misfortunes served only to convince them of the necessity of redoubled exertions; and they sent ambassadors both to Genoa and to Venice for the purpose of getting up a party against their formidable opponent. The first of these cities had long since lost all love for independence; its inhabitants cared but little to whom they were subject, provided they were allowed to continue their avocations or their amusements in peace;* and the proposition of the Florentines in consequence found but little favour in their eyes. But in the second, which retained all its love of independence, they were the means of lighting a flame of war which burned for several years in the north of Italy.

* Schiller puts this sentiment into the mouth of Fiesco in the following century, "Mag er Genua in die Tasche stecken, und an einen Kaper von Tunis vershachern, was kümmert's uns? wir trinken Cyprier und küssen schöne Mädchen."

The fears and the hatred of the Venetians had already been excited by Francesco Carmagnola, and in him the Florentines found a ready abettor of their wishes. It is said that Philip, aware of the implacable enmity which this general bore him, and also of his military talents, which would render his enmity formidable, had a dose of poison administered to him by some of his agents, which, however, was not potent enough to produce the desired effect. The discovery of this plot served to dispel whatever doubts might have been entertained of the sincerity of the deserter, and to give a potent handle to the enemies of Philip.

On the 25th December 1425, the Venetian senate assembled for the purpose of deciding the all-important question of peace or war. Permission to speak was first given to the Florentine ambassador, who, having brought before them all the proofs he could collect of the ambitious designs of the duke, and the little reliance that could be placed on his promises, represented the danger with which every independent state in the peninsula would be threatened if his career was not checked while yet there was time. On the other hand, the ambassadors of Philip endeavoured to show that the war with the Florentines had been begun by themselves, and that it was the great wish of their master to live in peace and good-will with all. When both parties had spoken, Carmagnola, who, in addition to his reputation as a commander, had acquired the interest of a martyr, addressed the senate in a powerful speech. He descanted on the ambition and the cruelty of the man they

were called upon to oppose, and gave weight to his arguments by an exposure of the tricks he had played with others, and the unscrupulous designs he still entertained—all of which he had opportunities of knowing while in his service. Finally, he stirred up the passions of his audience by expatiating on the cruelties to which his own wife and children, then prisoners of the duke, were subjected. At the same time he assured them that, though his ambition was great, he had neither talents nor courage to carry out his plans if he were properly opposed. "Give me an army," he said in conclusion, "and I will soon bring this unprincipled and dangerous man to his senses." The doge Andreas Foscari threw his whole weight into the scale, already turned against the duke; and the result was, that the two republics signed a treaty of alliance offensive and defensive against him. This confederation was afterwards joined by many potentates and princes who, in consequence of his ambition, had lost, or were already trembling for, their dominions. The principal of these were the marquises of Ferrara, Mantua, and Montferrat, and the duke of Savoy. They were also supported by Alphonso of Aragon, the ex-king of Naples. Francesco Carmagnola undertook the command of the forces designed to lower the man whom his valour had assisted to raise.

The campaign was opened by a successful attempt on the part of Carmagnola to take the city of Brescia by surprise. That city is situated between Verona and Milan; and as it commanded the line of communication

between the headquarters of Philip and the territories which were coveted both by him and his enemies, its possession must have been important to both parties alike. Though it had for some time past belonged to the lords of Milan, there existed within it a formidable remnant of the old Guelf party, opposed by traditionary recollections to the Visconti, and friendly to the Florentines. By the assistance of this party, Carmagnola was introduced into the city on the night of the 16th of March 1426. The citadel, however, along with the adjacent part of the suburb, remained faithful to the Milanese. The duke and Francesco Sforza * were as well aware of the importance of this place as was their adversary; and so anxious were they to regain what they had lost that the latter arrived before the citadel, along with all the forces that had been scattered through the Milanese, within three days after the revolt of the inhabitants. Here, with the assistance of the garrison, he managed to give considerable annoyance to his enemies; but as the armies of his master were scattered far and wide through his extensive dominions and conquests, and as their lines of communication had been intercepted by an artifice, by which the marquis of Ferrara had managed to swell the water of the Panara, he was no match for the forces which his enemy was able to bring against him on the spot. After having infused an addition of strength into the garrison, he

* Sanuto says that Francesco Sforza was in Brescia at the time of the entrance of Carmagnola; but all other historians have related the circumstances as in the text.

retreated from the city by night, before the Venetian general was able to attack. The latter pursued him with a great part of his army. As Carmagnola's available forces were weakened, from his having been obliged to leave a considerable number behind him to protect the town and its inhabitants from the Milanese garrison in the citadel, Sforza, as soon as he had arrived at an advantageous situation, determined on offering him battle. An engagement took place, in which neither party could claim the honour of having gained any advantage; but to one who is anxious to gain time, an indecisive encounter is often attended with profit; and as Francesco Sforza managed thereby to infuse strength into the garrison, to impart confidence to his friends at Brescia, and to concentrate his own forces at Montechiaro, within nine miles of the enemy, there to keep watch over his movements till his own reinforcements should arrive, its results must be regarded as reflecting great credit on the enterprise and the sagacity of the young general.

Late in the season the Milanese reinforcements arrived, under Piccinino and some of the best captains of the age. It seemed now as if nothing could prevent the execution of Sforza's plans for the relief of Brescia. But, unfortunately, among all the generals there was no one commander-in-chief; and the result of this campaign, so well planned by him, was merely destined to show the disadvantage of a multiplicity of counsellors in war.*

* See an interesting dissertation on this subject in MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, lib. 3. chap. 15. After referring to several examples in ancient and modern history in proof of his opinions, he concludes by saying it is better to send

On the one side was Carmagnola, sole general of the forces; on the other were a number of condottieri, all equal in rank—all, except Niccolo Piccinino, jealous of the rising fortunes of him who had begun the campaign, and almost preferring to suffer defeat themselves to adding aught to his glory. The result of this was as might be expected. While the Milanese generals disputed among themselves, their enemy made steady progress with the siege, and in the course of time received reinforcements from the Florentines. It was in vain that Francesco Sforza pointed out several opportunities of attacking them to advantage—in the whole camp he found but one to back him: the rest carried their jealousy so far that they tried, though fruitlessly, to undermine him in the confidence of the duke. At length the garrison, giving up all hope of assistance, surrendered to Carmagnola, and the Venetians remained masters of the most important city between the confines of the disputed territory of Verona and Milan.

The result of the first year of the war was so mortifying to Philip that he for some time lent a not unwilling ear to the pacific propositions of Pope Martin, and, according to some, had even consented, among other things, to allow the Venetians the undisputed possession of the territory of Brescia. But this last condition was too galling to the spirit of the man who had aspired to the dominion of the whole peninsula, and too mortifying to the national pride of the Milanese,

an expedition under one man of ordinary prudence, than under two most talented men equal in command.

for either to abide by it. Whether Philip ever signed a treaty to that effect or not, it is certain that, in the beginning of the year 1427, he prepared to follow up the war with greater vigour than ever against the Lion of St Mark.

In this campaign the Venetians first made use of the naval skill they had acquired in the Adriatic and the Levant to annoy their inland enemies. The Po, styled by the Latin poet the king of rivers, extending from beyond Turin to the Adriatic, watered their richest cities and fairest provinces, and by means of subsidiary streams opened a communication into the very heart of the Milanese. Its broad waters afforded the Venetians an opportunity of attacking their enemies on an element which they still conceived to be their own. Accordingly, on hearing of the warlike intentions of the duke, they lost no time in preparing a fleet, which in the spring of the year they sent up the river, with directions to co-operate with Carmagnola. The fleet ascended as far as Cremona, where they found several ships belonging to the duke. Of these they took four, and so impressed their enemies with an idea of their superiority by water that they caused them to retreat to Pavia, leaving behind them several of their finest vessels.

In the mean time Carmagnola had advanced from his winter quarters at Mantua, crossed the Po, and had begun to lay waste the territory adjoining Cremona. Philip and his generals had opened the campaign by an attempt to regain Brescia; but however desirable the acquisition of this place might appear to

the duke, he ordered it to be abandoned for the defence of the Cremonese. Having arrived with a considerable force within a mile of the Venetian camp, he gave directions to his generals to attack to advantage if possible, but on no account to risk the loss of the army. Though they were inferior in numbers to their enemies, the captains were inspired by the hope of performing something brilliant in the presence of their sovereign, and acquiring a proportionate reward; they advanced to attack, and found their enemies strongly fortified by their baggage-waggons, with a trench in the front. On beholding this impediment, the elder and more experienced of the captains counselled the others to desist; but their younger and more sanguine brothers in arms would not hear of retreat after they had advanced so far. Francesco Sforza, like his father, preferring to run the risk of being beaten to being forced to turn, was the first to pass the line of intrenchments: he was followed by several others; the battle commenced, and was carried on with great vigour by both parties, till they were separated by night. In the course of the engagement, both Carmagnola and Francesco Sforza were almost taken prisoners. The horse of the former having fallen under him in the place where the engagement was hottest, he was immediately surrounded by both friends and foes, and with great difficulty saved: the latter was lingering within the intrenched position of the enemy, after his men had retreated, and found himself encircled by the soldiers of the opposite party; but the dimness of the light,

and the clouds of dust, which, in the words of Corio, a Milanese historian, were so thick that everything appeared in a mist, and none, however near, could be distinguished except by voice, prevented him being recognised. This drawn battle was followed by some unimportant operations: the fortress of Bina was retaken by the Milanese, and again fell into the hands of the Venetians; and, after some further manœuvring, the hostile armies found themselves within four miles of one another at Macalo.

Philip having, by this time, experienced the evils of a multiplicity of rulers in his camp, determined to elect a commander-in-chief; but unfortunately on this occasion he did not display his usual sagacity, and Charles Malatesta, the object of his selection, turned out to be a man of no ability whatever. A few days before their arrival at Macalo, a certain foot-soldier of Sforza's, by name Nardo Torquato, had challenged one of the enemies to single combat. While at the above place, it was suggested by Carmagnola, and consented to by Malatesta, that they should be allowed to gratify their wishes. Accordingly, it was arranged that the combat should take place on the 11th of October. When the day came, a large number of the Milanese soldiers went out of the camp as spectators, and the majority of those that remained, thinking that, for the present, they were safe from molestation, had laid aside their arms. Francesco Sforza alone suspected some treachery on the part of Carmagnola, and entreated the commander-in-chief to have all his men in readiness. But his advice was as

vain as Cassandra's; only Niccolo Piccinino and one other captain agreed with him; the remainder, including the commander-in-chief, heeded him not. Carmagnola had secretly given orders that his men should be kept under arms; and as soon as he was well assured of the unguarded state of his adversary, he attacked him. The troops of Sforza and Piccinino alone were prepared to receive him; and though a large portion of the others, including Charles Malatesta, were made prisoners, the effectual resistance offered by these two generals allowed time for some of their less prudent allies to make good their retreat.

The result of this battle, though it served to show the sagacity of Sforza, was highly disastrous to the duke. He endeavoured by his diplomacy to retrieve the ground that Malatesta had lost by his simplicity. His first step was to send ambassadors to the Emperor Sigismund to implore his assistance. But a temporary respite was, above all things, necessary for him; and in order to obtain this, as he never regarded the terms of any treaty longer than suited his convenience, he did not hesitate to make considerable sacrifices. For this purpose he entreated Pope Martin to arrange the terms of a peace, to obtain which he agreed to yield to the Venetians the town and territory of Bergamos, and that of Vercelli to the duke of Savoy. And having, at the same time, married the daughter of the latter, he managed, by his alliances and his concessions, to dissolve the formidable confederacy that seemed likely to threaten his very existence as a monarch.

CHAPTER II.

FAILURE OF FRANCESCO SFORZA IN AN EXPEDITION AGAINST GENOA.—SUSPICIOUS AFFAIR WITH THE LUCCHESE.—LEADS TO A FRESH ITALIAN WAR.—DESTRUCTION OF VENETIAN ARMAMENT ON THE PO.—FAILURE OF CARMAGNOLA.—SUCCESSES OF SFORZA.—BETROTHAL OF BIANCA MARIA, DAUGHTER AND HEIRESS OF PHILIP, TO SFORZA.—EXECUTION OF CARMAGNOLA.—SUSPICIONS OF THE DUKE OF MILAN—HIS ADDRESS TO SFORZA.

BEFORE the peace was concluded, Francesco Sforza had been sent by Philip to the relief of Genoa, which was sore pressed by Alphonso of Aragon from the sea, and by Thomas Fregoso, the ex-doge, with a large party of exiles, by land. But in the conduct of this expedition he did not show his usual prudence: in crossing the ridge of mountains which separates Liguria from the plains in the north-east of Italy, he was attacked by a large body of the mountaineers, whom he had hitherto believed, or professed to believe, well-wishers to his cause; and in the midst of the defiles his army was sore pressed by the showers of stones, arrows, and javelins, which came upon them from all sides thick as a hail-storm in the Alps. The regular troops of the condottiere were no match for the mountaineers at this sort of fighting. Many were killed; and the greater part of the army must have been lost, if they had not been saved by the friendly offices of Eliana Spinola, a lady

of rank in the neighbouring city of Villa Ronca. On hearing of the danger of the Milanese army, she afforded them a refuge within her walls; and she afterwards arranged with the Genoese that they should be allowed to retire without molestation.

The circumstance that a general like Sforza should allow himself to be surprised in the manner described, and then find such a convenient way to escape, is not free from suspicion; and his enemies availed themselves of the occasion to accuse him of treachery to the duke. On his return he was ordered to take up his winter quarters at Mortara, where he remained for some time in disgrace. There is no clear evidence whether he continued after this in the duke's service or not, but it is certain that for two years at least he did not receive any pay from him. All this time his officers and soldiers remained with him with a wonderful constancy. The Florentines and Venetians also made repeated offers to him; but, either from a sense of duty or interest, he preferred remaining in his present disagreeable situation to joining those who might soon become the enemies of the duke. In the course of the year 1430 Philip again took him into favour, and it is said became convinced of his innocency. If this last fact be true, it affords no small presumption in his favour. But in reviewing the history of these times, when everything was a combination of tricks, intrigues, and treachery, it is impossible to form a right estimate of the motives of a man's conduct on any one occasion: the condottiere might have brought his army into a scrape with

the connivance of his sovereign, or the sovereign might have been convinced of his treachery, and yet determine on turning his talents to account; or he might still prefer him to others, his equals in treachery, and inferiors in ability.

The subdivision of the country into such a number of minor principalities, and the restless spirit of the people, rendered the long duration of peace an impossibility. The Florentines, who were as anxious to destroy the independence of neighbouring states as they were jealous of their own, were the first to rekindle the flames of discord. An attempt to extend to their allies the *catasto*, a species of income-tax, which the expenses of the war had rendered necessary, caused an insurrection among several of them. A partial success which they gained at Volterra, a city which had shown itself foremost in opposition to the new impost, so whetted their ambition that they determined on hazarding another effort to make themselves masters of Lucca. That city was then under the dominion of one Paul Guinigi, and was perhaps enjoying a greater degree of prosperity than it had done at any time since the halcyon time of Castracani. Niccolo Fortebraccio, the nephew of the great Braccio da Montone, was then in the pay of the Florentines; and they, for the purpose of making experiment of the possibility of their project, persuaded him to invade the territory of the Lucchese, as it were, on his own account, after the manner of the predatory bands of Duke Werner and Fra Moreale. Not long afterwards they threw off all disguise, and openly declared

war against the Lucchese. Paul Guinigi sent ambassadors to Philip for assistance; and he, though bound by treaty not to pass the river Magra, could not bear the idea of seeing a city of such importance pass into the hands of the hereditary enemies of the house of Visconti. For this purpose he persuaded Francesco Sforza to go to the assistance of the Lucchese, much in the same manner that Fortebraccio had in the preceding year invaded their territory. The latter retired on his approach. Mutual suspicions, however—fomented, it is said, by the Florentines—had grown up between Paul and the Lucchese; the latter delivered their tyrant a prisoner to Sforza, who had joined them either because he believed the report that the former was about to sell the city to the Florentines, or because he would not give him all the money he wanted. At the same time, they are said to have offered the signory of their city to Sforza himself. This, however, he had the prudence or the patriotism to decline; and after he had sent Guinigi and his sons in bonds to the duke of Milan, he continued to prosecute his conquests in the vicinity of Lucca. The Florentines, knowing that with mercenary soldiers corruption often avails more than force, promised to Sforza a considerable sum of money if he would, within a given time, take his departure, which he consented to do. To give an appearance of honesty to the transaction, he received the money as the arrears of his father's pension, and pretended that he could not find supplies for his army. At the same time, he said that he was not bound by any further engagement with the

duke. But though repeatedly solicited, he refused to enter into the service of the Florentines, and merely promised not to bear arms against them for three months.

The Florentines were again disappointed in their expectations of remaining undisturbed masters of the coveted territory; the duke was still as determined as ever that it should not fall into their hands, and for that purpose he sent thither Niccolo Piccinino in the same manner as he had previously sent Francesco Sforza.* Piccinino executed his task with less intrigue than his brother in arms, and he completely defeated the forces of the Florentines on the Serchio. The duke, elated with the success of his general, endeavoured to get up a league with the Lucchese and the Siennese against the Florentines; and the latter, on their part, determined to form another treaty with the Venetians against him. Thus, in little more than four years after the last peace, the flames of war were rekindled throughout the north of Italy.

Each commencement of hostilities was, of course, an important epoch in the life of one whose home was the camp, and whose element was war; and to Sforza,

* I confess that a considerable degree of mystery appears to me to hang over the whole of this transaction of Sforza's with the Lucchese. I do not find any record of the duke of Milan having either reproached him with his conduct or hesitated to employ him afterwards. Yet if he was not acting under his orders, why should he have sent Paul Guinigi to him, and why should Philip, after his retreat, have sent Niccolo Piccinino to oppose the Florentines? I have examined, I think, nearly every authority on the subject, and, though some are more copious in their details than others, they all agree in the principal facts narrated in the text. One of them only, Pietro Candido, *Vita di Sforza*, *Rerum Italiarum Scriptores*, vol. xx., says that Sforza acted throughout in conformity with the orders of Philip—an assertion totally unsupported by concurrent testimony. The following appears to me the most likely explanation of the conduct of Sforza and Philip: The former had received no pay from the latter since the failure of his expedition

who was above all things desirous of reigning, it was evident that much of his future fortune might depend on the part which he decided to take. He was, as before, sought after by both parties alike. His conduct in the affair with the Lucchese, which at other times, and with other people, would, at the least, have been very questionable, seemed then to have cast no slur upon the character of one of his profession. Neither that nor his doubtful fidelity in the expedition against Genoa caused his former employer to set less value on his services. And he, too, for the same, and even still more cogent, reasons than those which had formerly weighed with him, determined on fighting for the duke. Philip had now been married four years to the daughter of the duke of Savoy; he had no issue: his natural daughter, Bianca Maria, was generally looked upon as his heir. It is true that in those times he might have put himself at liberty to form another connection by murder or divorce, and he had already shown that he was not very scrupulous in such matters; but the impolicy of breaking with the duke of Savoy would prevent his

against the Genoese. At last leave was given to him to invade the Lucchese, and take what booty he could find in compensation for his arrears. Having, after the retreat of the Florentines, either begun to suspect Paul Guinigi, or quarrelled with him on his own account, he joined the citizens in seizing his person, and, expecting to receive something from Philip, he sent him to him in bonds; but as he received nothing in return, and as he had not found sufficient at Lucca to compensate for the arrears of pay that still remained due, he thought himself at liberty to accept this offer of the Florentines. As he had for some time past ceased to receive the pay, and could therefore no longer be said to be in the employment of the duke, he was not actually guilty of any violation of faith in thus providing for himself; and as he declined joining the Florentines against his former master, he committed no breach of friendship or alliance.

behaving towards his present wife as he had done towards a friendless woman. The prospect of succeeding to the glorious heritage of the Visconti might well dazzle the son of Gian Attendolo; and in holding this out to Francesco Sforza as the reward of his services, Philip showed that he knew well the character of the man with whom he had to deal. It is probable, also, that other reasons, in addition to the desire of retaining the ablest general of the day, weighed with him on this occasion. The prospect of a line of heirs is gratifying to most men who have anything to leave, and often strengthens their position. The ambition of the duke, and his uncertain title to a great part of his dominions, rendered the latter an object of great importance with him. The military abilities and the address of Francesco Sforza qualified him above all others to make up for anything that might seem deficient in the title of his natural daughter; and whatever side future circumstances might induce him to take, the prospect of this heritage would be a check upon his conduct. Actuated, no doubt, by these considerations, the duke received Francesco Sforza with the greatest possible distinction, promised him the hand of the heiress, honoured him with the title of his adopted son, made him count of four cities, and gave him a standard with the emblem of the Visconti.

On the commencement of the war in 1431, the Venetians beheld their party in Italy strengthened by the elevation of one of their countrymen, under the title of Eugenius IV., to the papal chair. In addition to this, their spirits were in no small degree

elated by their recollection of the former victories of Carmagnola, and the boastful anticipations in which he, unaware of the tragic fate in store for him, indulged. The campaign was opened by a smart skirmish between him and Francesco Sforza, near Soncino, in which the latter took five hundred horsemen prisoners. Piqued at this partial success of their adversaries, the Venetians ordered their general to advance into the territory of Cremona, there to act in concert with Niccolo of Trevigi, the commander of their armament. The beginning of this movement was attended with a partial success: the Venetians had taken six galleys of the Milanese, and struck terror into the whole of their fleet, when the arrival of Francesco Sforza and Niccolo Piccinino restored some degree of confidence. The former had sent into the Venetian camp two spies, who, feigning to be deserters, spread false intelligence therein; in consequence of which Carmagnola had taken a position considerably north of the Po, where he was expecting his enemies to attack him, while they were in reality on the southern bank of the river, taking part in the engagement. Pachino Eustachio, the Milanese admiral, managed, with great dexterity, to bring his adversaries in contact with the bank, close to the place where his friends were stationed; the heavy-armed troops of Sforza dismounted and boarded their galleys; and the unprotected sailors of the Venetians, being unable to contend with the steel-clad and almost invulnerable soldiers, were all slaughtered or made prisoners. When the battle was nearly over, Carmagnola, having

discovered his error, arrived at the north bank of the Po, close to the scene of action; but his presence was of no avail: his heavy cavalry could take no part in the action on the opposite side of the river, and he was doomed to witness, without in any way being able to relieve, the losses of his friends. The general result of the action was, that the Milanese took twenty-eight galleys, along with all the arms, stores, and about eight thousand prisoners of the Venetians, and destroyed the rest of their fleet.

Nor was Carmagnola more fortunate, or Sforza less so, in the conclusion of the campaign. On the 15th of October, a small party of the soldiers of the former attacked and took the fortress of San Luca, in the town of Cremona. It was generally supposed that, if he had followed up this partial success, he must have made himself master of the whole town; but though his friends continued for two days in the citadel, he declined doing so, alleging that he was fearful of some ambush on the part of the enemy. While he was there doing nothing, Francesco Sforza was crowning the victories that he had already gained in the east of Lombardy, by further successes in the west. At the instigation of Philip, he invaded the territories of the marquis of Montferrat, and took all the principal fortresses in his dominions—among others, the castle of San Enasio, the ordinary place of his residence. The marquis, in despair, fled across the Alps, into Germany, and betook himself to Vienna. He was, however, shortly afterwards reinstated by the mediation of the duke of Savoy and the Emperor

Sigismund, the latter of whom about this time came to Milan, and went through the ceremony of having the crown of iron placed upon his head. But the duke of Milan, for some reason or other, refused to see him.

The fruits which the rival captains reaped from the campaign were exactly in proportion to their successes: Francesco Sforza, after a splendid succession of victories, returned to Milan, and was there, at the age of thirty-three years, declared the betrothed husband of the heiress, then only seven years old. But a sad fate awaited Carmagnola. The Venetians, always too ready to control and to cripple the movements of their generals, did not hesitate to impute to them the blame of any disaster. The haughty temper of Carmagnola had already raised him many enemies at Venice, to whom his extraordinary want of success afforded an opportunity of accusing him of treachery. The Council of Ten lent a ready ear to these insinuations; but, not daring to quarrel with him while at the head of an army, they requested him to come to them to take measures for the future. During the whole of his journey he was received with every mark of distinction; but on his arrival at the city of Venice he was thrown into prison, and tortured till he confessed himself guilty of all that was laid to his charge. After the council had satisfied themselves with this proof of his crimes, he was brought into the Place of St Mark, his mouth gagged, lest his tale of woe might excite the people, and there beheaded between two columns. Though it may appear strange that such an experienced and able general

should have allowed himself to be deceived by a man so much his junior as Sforza, and afterwards neglect a favourable opportunity of taking Cremona, it is certain that no proofs of his guilt have descended to posterity, and the proceedings of his adversaries lead us to infer that none such existed at the time of his execution. But neither innocence nor virtue could shield any one who, either on public or private grounds, had incurred the enmity of the terrible and mysterious Council of Ten.

Before the end of the year Sforza had a narrow escape from suffering the same fate as his unfortunate adversary. The continued insinuations of his enemies had begun to make some impression on the mind of the duke, and he sent for him to Cremona, authorising his messengers, if required, to bring him there by force. It was arranged, as was said, to despatch him on his arrival at Milan. His friends had been informed of these reports, and entreated him not to put himself in the duke's power; but he, relying either on his innocency or his address, determined on going to Milan and clearing himself before his accusers. His good fortune carried him through this, as through all emergencies; and the duke, when satisfied of his conduct and intentions, is reported thus to have addressed him :— "My son, you have given an example of the truth of a proverb that has now become trite. It is said that one person may be so often told by everybody that he has no nose, that he will distrust himself, and put his hand to feel, as if in doubt whether he really had one or not.

Thus, though we have never really doubted of your fidelity, courtesy, and the sincerity of your intentions, we merely put you on your trial that we might be able to reply to the insinuations of your enemies. We have acted in this manner, that others might be as well acquainted with your innocency and virtue as we are."*

* Simoneta, lib. 2.

CHAPTER III.

SFORZA SETS OUT TO LOOK AFTER THE FIEFS HE HAD INHERITED FROM HIS FATHER—MAKES HIMSELF MASTER OF A CONSIDERABLE TERRITORY IN THE VICINITY OF ANCONA—IS CREATED MARQUIS OF ANCONA BY THE POPE.—WAR IN THE STATES OF THE CHURCH.—FLIGHT OF EUGENIUS FROM ROME.—FRESH WAR IN ITALY—POSITION OF THE MEDICI AT FLORENCE.—BANISHMENT AND RETURN OF COSMO DE' MEDICI.—SFORZA JOINS THE FLORENTINES AND VENETIANS—CONSTRUCTS A BRIDGE OVER THE TIBER—IS IN DANGER OF LOSING HIS ARMY FROM THE INUNDATIONS.—DEFEAT OF LEO SFORZA BY FORTEBRACCIO—FORTEBRACCIO AFTERWARDS DEFEATED BY ALEXANDER SFORZA—DIES OF HIS WOUNDS IN CAPTIVITY.

EIGHT years had now elapsed since Francesco Sforza had succeeded to be the chief of the school of arms that had been founded by his father. In this period he had shown himself fully competent to sustain the reputation of his name. In his first campaigns in Lombardy he had been often thwarted by the jealousy, or clogged by the incompetency, of his confederates; and he had at times been obliged to act contrary to his own judgment, in deference to that of senior generals. But success had invariably attended him when he acted alone; and whatever disaster befel the army in which he had a command might generally be traced to the neglect of his advice. Of this no one was better aware than the duke of Milan. His failure in the expedition to Genoa was more than compensated by his brilliant successes in the campaign of 1432. From that

time he cannot be said to have ranked any longer among the ordinary condottieri of the age. He contested the palm of military superiority with Niccolo Piccinino, the head of the Braccian school of arms, who was at least twenty years older than himself. In astuteness and address he had shown that he was inferior to none. He had already formed a sort of matrimonial engagement with one who might be the heiress of the most powerful sovereign in Italy; and though he had no dominions but the fiefs he had inherited from his father, he began now to take a part in the politics of the peninsula which was more like that of an independent prince than a hireling commander.

His engagements in Lombardy had hitherto allowed him but little time for looking after his paternal inheritances. To these, after the pacification of the north, and his betrothal to the heiress of Milan, he began to turn his attention. But while he was on his way to Apulia for this purpose, an opportunity of making a large addition to his dominions presented itself, which he did not fail to turn to account. The inhabitants of the March of Ancona implored his assistance against the pope's legate, Vitellius, by whom they were cruelly oppressed. This he readily promised to give; but, as the strong ally generally enslaves the weak who claims his protection, it need hardly be said that he took measures to make himself master of that province in the place of Vitellius. In twenty-three days he had overrun the whole of the territory, and taken all the cities therein except Camerino—thus almost following the

example of the man who described his own career in three Latin dissyllables.* In this expedition he received no small assistance from his kinsman, Michael Attendolo, by whom he had been joined. All this time there is no doubt but that he was certainly acting with the approbation, if he was not positively following the advice, of the duke of Milan.† It cannot but be a matter of regret that, forgetful of the example of his parent, he abandoned all the cities that he took to the plunder of the soldiers.

Pope Eugenius was in no small degree startled at beholding Sforza forming a principality in the heart of the dominion that he claimed as his own. But, at the same time, he was pressed by still greater troubles. A general council, which shortly before had assembled at Basle, refused to acknowledge the rights of the bishops of Rome either to their supremacy over the church or to their territorial possessions; and Fortebraccio and other condottieri of the duke of Milan had, with the sanction of their master, availed themselves of the decisions of this council as a pretext for invading his dominions. Deeming it advisable, under these circumstances, to conciliate the man whom he was least able to oppose, he created Sforza marquis of Ancona, and standard-bearer of the church, on condition of his expelling the other condottieri from his dominions. Thus the former not only obtained a legal title to his own conquests, but he was

* "Ut non immeritò iisdem verbis gloriari potuerit quibus Cæsarem in Pharnacis bello usum ferunt—*Veni, vidi, vici.*"—*Petri Candidi Vita Francisci Sfortiæ.*

† MURATORI, *Annali d'Italia.*

also honoured with a dignity which rendered his station much higher than that of any of his rivals in arms. But his rising fortunes soon provoked the envy of those who had formerly been his friends; Piccinino asserted a claim to some of the cities which he had subjugated; and it was thought that the duke of Milan, disappointed at his not having made over to him the province of Ancona, and jealous of his increasing power, stirred up enemies against him. The result was, that, about the middle of the year 1434, a war broke out in the States of the Church, between Francesco Sforza on one side, and Niccolo Piccinino and Fortebraccio on the other. Though these generals had no other object but their own aggrandisement in view, the former pretended to be acting under the authority of Eugenius, the two latter under that of the council of Basle.

The campaign was commenced by an attack by Sforza's generals on Fortebraccio, near Tivoli, in which the latter had the worst. This slight disaster, however, was soon repaired by the timely arrival of Piccinino, with whom he continued for some time to lay waste the territory in the immediate vicinity of Rome. In the mean time, a strong party was being formed against the pope within the walls of the Eternal City. On the 29th of May, a large body of the people went to him, and, after complaining bitterly of the loss of property entailed on them by his policy, demanded that he should intrust to them the temporary management of affairs. To add force to their entreaties, they besieged him in his palace. He, however, managed to escape in

disguise down the Tiber; and, though recognised, he made his way out to sea in a small boat, amidst a shower of javelins and stones. He afterwards landed at Leghorn, and betook himself to Florence.

Sforza, however, whose fortunes were now for the present bound up with the pope, determined to lose no time in striking a vigorous blow at his adversaries. The duke of Milan, anxious above all things for the success of the pope's enemies, and well knowing the abilities of his son-in-law, sent ambassadors to expostulate with him; but he for a time paid no attention to their representations. They, however, relying on his connection with their master, persevered in soliciting him, even after he had taken the field; and he, on one occasion, after he had given orders to his kinsman, Michael Attendolo, to commence the attack, replied that, if they could now stop his troops, he would endeavour to effect an accommodation. It was his opinion that, before this message could be given to his soldiers, they would be actually engaged with the enemy. Accordingly, a trumpeter was sent forward with orders to sound a halt if the battle had not actually commenced; and he found the Sfortian army just emerging from a valley which lay between the camps of Michael Attendolo and Fortebraccio, the traversing of which had occupied a longer time than Sforza had expected. The signal for the halt was given just as they arrived in front of Fortebraccio's position. The soldiers of the latter, ignorant of what was going on in the hostile camp, were terrified when they saw the number of their enemies,

which appeared infinitely greater when they were drawn up in their immediate vicinity than while they were on march; they were consequently seized with a panic, and, abandoning their camp, with all its stores and baggage, they fled in all directions. Sforza was, however, prevented, by the intervention of the ambassadors, from following up his success; and the disputants soon after came to an agreement, by which Piccinino and Fortebraccio bound themselves not to interfere in the affairs of Rome.

This treaty, however, only served to transfer the seat of the war into the more distant part of the Territory of the Church. Sforza, anxious to extend the limits of his own dominions, continued to take several cities in the name of the pope; and the two other generals did not think themselves bound by treaty to abstain from opposing the standard-bearer of the church in his own career of aggrandisement and conquest. The details of the campaign are uninteresting, and it was not attended with any decisive result. Sforza was prevented by a severe attack of fever from bringing all his talents into play; while the skill of his uncle, Michael Attendolo, and of his brother, Leo, prevented his adversaries from gaining any important advantage.

While these things were going on in the States of the Church, there appeared in Romagna a fresh source of discord, which gave rise once more to a general war. The populace of Imola rebelled against the pope, and availed themselves of the assistance of the Milanese soldiers to obtain their independence. At the same time

the faction of the Canedola, a powerful family at Bologna, had expelled thence the pontifical governor, and brought into the city two hundred of the cavalry of the duke. Eugenius, who was still at Florence, used all his influence with the inhabitants of that city, as also with his countrymen, the Venetians, to repel this fresh act of aggression on the part of Filippo Maria. At first these republics merely remonstrated with the duke against his violation of the last treaty; but when they saw that he was determined to retain possession of these two cities, and that he had sent Nicolo Piccinino to Imola, they did not hesitate to send assistance to the partisans of the pope. As Francesco Sforza, however, was still oppressed by illness, they had no captain capable of opposing Piccinino, and they were soon out-generalled and defeated by him. His success was the cause of a third coalition being formed against Philip. But, in the mean time, events specially deserving of notice had taken place in Florence.

From the time of the expulsion of the extreme democratic party from that city, the government had continued in the hands of the moderate aristocracy; and under them she had enjoyed a degree of internal tranquillity which perhaps had been unknown to her since the unfortunate disputes of the Buondelmonti. This party had been successively headed by Maso degli Albizzi, Nicolo d'Uzzano, and Rinaldo degli Albizzi. In the course of time, many of those who had been obliged to leave the city in the dark days of its discord were

allowed to return. About the year 1420, Giovanni de' Medici, the descendant of Salvestro de' Medici, who had shown such moderation as the leader of the democratical party, was possessed of considerable wealth, and universally esteemed for his integrity. Of his general character, Machiavelli* speaks in the following terms: "He loved everybody; he spoke well of good men, and pitied the bad. Though he never sought honours, they always accrued to him. He loved peace, and avoided war; he relieved men in their adversity, and helped them on in their prosperity. He was averse to public spoliation, and always had the general good in view. In office he was always gracious in his address, but more remarkable for his prudence than his eloquence. At his death he was rich in treasure, but still more wealthy in the good-will of all." His refusal to join Albizzi and Uzzano, in an attempt to monopolise the chief honours of the state, gained him additional popularity. He left behind him two sons, Lorenzo and Cosmo, whom he is reported thus to have addressed on his deathbed:—"I die contented, in that I leave you rich in health, and of a standing that, if you follow my footsteps, you may live in Florence with honour, and with the good-will of all. Nothing adds to my happiness so much as the consciousness of never having offended any; on the contrary, whenever I had an opportunity, I have always done good to everybody. . . . With respect to public honours, if you wish to enjoy security, take of them as much as the laws of your

* *Istoria*, lib. iv.

country and your fellow-citizens allow; then you will never bring on yourself unpopularity, or run into danger. By acting in this manner, while I lived among so many enemies, and amidst the prevalence of such differences of opinion, I have not only maintained, but also augmented, my reputation."

The influence and the popularity of Cosmo increased so much after the death of Giovanni, that those who had rejoiced at this event, as freeing the state from too powerful a citizen, began to wish the father back in place of the son. After the death of Nicolo di Uzzano, the jealousy of the contending parties was left without any restraint, and Rinaldo degli Albizzi soon saw that Florence could not hold both him and Cosmo de' Medici. For the purpose of getting rid of his rival, he urged all the citizens, who ever hoped themselves to attain a high position in the state, to take arms to free the country from one who, availing himself of the evil intentions of a few, and the ignorance of the many, would be sure to enslave it. By dint of activity and intrigue, he managed to get one Bernardo Guadagni, a person most attached to himself, and jealous of Cosmo, appointed to the office of gonfaloniere. One of the first acts of the latter was to summon Cosmo de' Medici before the Signoria. That great citizen, though warned of his danger by several of his friends, obeyed the mandate of the chief magistrate, and as soon as he arrived in the palace was surrounded by armed men and cast into prison. After the perpetration of this act of violence, there was no small contention among the leaders of the dominant

faction as to whether they were to kill or to banish the man whom they all hated and feared: those who were of the one opinion urging strongly, that, if you lay hands on great men at all, you must utterly destroy them; the others counselling them to avoid bloodshed if possible, and warning them of the risk that they ran of bringing on themselves, by such a sanguinary act, the vengeance of a populace of whom Cosmo was the idol. He himself seemed to be of opinion that his adversaries would not be very scrupulous as to the means they might employ of getting rid of him, and, for fear of being poisoned, refused for four days to taste the food that was supplied to him in his confinement. On the fifth day, however, Frederic Malavolti, the person to whose care he had been committed, declared, in the most solemn manner, that no such treachery was intended, and, to prove the truth of his words, promised to take his meals with him for the future. In order further to mitigate the rigours of captivity, he one day invited one of the friends of his prisoner to sup with them. At the request of the latter, he allowed them to be alone together; and Cosmo, profiting by the occasion, gave his friend an order for eleven hundred ducats, of which he requested him to accept one hundred for himself, and to give the other thousand to the gonfaloniere. The metal, which has been celebrated for making its way through guards, and destroying barriers of stone, touched the heart of the latter, and in spite of all the influence of Rinaldo, and others who wished for the death of Cosmo, the result of the deliberations about him

were that he was banished to Padua. On hearing his sentence, he professed the same resignation to the will of the governors of his country as did the noble Englishman who said that it would be his comfort that "the same sun that warmed his sovereign should shine on him." * On his departure from Florence, he was, by his own request, attended by an escort, to save him from any attack that might be made on him. Every mark of attention was shown to him by the cities through which he passed on his route to Padua; and on his arrival there, he was received with the greatest honour by the Venetians.

The great and pompous letter that came from Capreæ, for the execution of Sejanus,† did not cause more distrust and fear at Rome than was produced by the banishment of the great Cosmo from Florence. Fear, and a sense of insecurity, came upon all alike, both those who had the upper hand and those who had been obliged to give way. Now that the illustrious exile had departed, the apprehensions excited by his power were forgotten by all but the leaders of the government party; the recollection of the good that he had done lived after him. The poor missed his charities, the populace his largesses; the tradesmen complained of the absence of their best customer; and Cosmo, being even while in exile possessed of the weapon‡ which over-

* *King Richard II.*, Act 1, scene 3. † JUVENAL, *Satire* 10.

‡ "οὐδεν γάρ ἀνθρώποισιν οἷον ἄργυρος
κακὸν νόμισμ, ἐβλαστε· Τοτο γὰρ πόλεις
πορθεῖ τοδ' ἄνδρας ἐξανίστησιν δόμων."
SOPH. *Antig.*

throws governments and drives men from their homes, knew how to turn all these dispositions to his advantage. Thus his party was strengthened by the power of his wealth, by the memory of his former reputation, by the expectation of his return. This state of public feeling was not unperceived by Albizzi, who, despairing of salvation by any other means, determined on making one more effort to monopolise the chief offices for his own party. The populace were thoroughly roused by what they deemed an attempt to infringe upon their liberties: they rose in arms, and completely overpowered their rulers. It is needless to remark that the friends of Cosmo de' Medici profited by these events. The Medici had for generations past been the nominal heads of the extreme democratical party, and their wealth and their munificence had made them special favourites with the lower class of the populace. The Signoria passed a decree recalling Cosmo, and banishing Rinaldo degli Albizzi, with such a number of others that, in the words of Machiavelli, there was scarcely a state in Italy to which some of them were not sent, and many of these were quite crowded with them.

On the 23d of October 1434, Cosmo de' Medici reentered Florence. Never was a conqueror, on his arrival home after a triumph, received with greater demonstration of popularity; by every one he was saluted as father of his country and benefactor of his fellow-citizens. Thus, after so many changes of government, did Florence fall under the rule of a powerful citizen, whose descendants were destined to be its dukes.

These events had just taken place when the new coalition already alluded to was formed against Philip.

On this occasion, as before, Francesco Sforza was sought after by all the belligerents. There were, however, reasons arising from his altered circumstances that induced him to join a different party from what he had formerly done. He was now in possession of several cities and a considerable strip of territory in the provinces of Umbria and Ancona, and had laid the foundation of what he hoped might be an independent principality on the coast of the Adriatic. Though he had acquired these cities by arms, he held them by a title which had been granted him by the pope, and he was not yet sufficiently confirmed in his possessions to dispense with this advantage. Moreover, as gonfaloniere of the church, and generalissimo of Pope Eugenius's forces, he might have opportunities of strengthening and extending his dominions. As Eugenius was the prime mover of the league against Philip, it would have been very inexpedient in Sforza to have joined the party to which he was opposed. It is true that Philip's natural daughter had been betrothed to him, and he had been declared his adopted son and the heir of the duchy of Milan; but he naturally preferred, to the uncertain reversion even of this splendid heritage, the more certain prospects of establishing a kingdom, the foundations of which had already been laid. Moreover, the duke had previously engaged, and had begun to show a decided preference for, Nicolo Piccinino; and Sforza's dislike and jealousy of that captain rendered it impossible that he

could cordially co-operate with him. And as Bianca Maria had already been betrothed to him, and could not well be given to another, he was not without hopes that he might still retain the advantage which that connection had seemed to hold out to him.

The events of the campaign of 1434 were principally confined to the place in which it had begun—the Territories of the Church. Francesco Sforza was furnished with eight hundred horse and five hundred foot, or, according to others, with three thousand horse and one thousand foot, and was ordered by the pope to oppose himself to Fortebraccio, the most persevering and the most annoying of his enemies. That general was in possession of several strong places in the heart of the pope's dominions, whence his troops made frequent sallies, and did much injury to the neighbouring inhabitants. In order effectually to check their pillaging sorties, which often took place simultaneously in different places, Francesco Sforza deemed it necessary to maintain the shortest lines or communication throughout the whole of the country so exposed; and for this purpose constructed over the Tiber, a little above Rome, a bridge which was chiefly formed of boards placed on very strong ropes, stretched across the river on the side of a dilapidated arch, and supported by its foundations. The construction of an artificial bridge in this manner would scarcely be deemed worthy of notice in modern warfare; yet at that time Sforza gained no small reputation, both on account of the novelty of the idea and the ingenuity of the plan.

Having effected this object, which he deemed essential for the prosecution of his plans, he laid siege to a garrison of Fortebraccio's in Assisi, and made himself master of Fano and several of the surrounding cities.

In the mean time, intelligence arrived that Nicolo Piccinino was about to invade Flaminia, and Eugenius particularly requested that Francesco Sforza would meet him with the greater part of his disposable force. He therefore left his brother, Leo Sforza, in command of a small number of men to keep in check the garrison of Fortebraccio, and marched himself with the great body of his troops to execute the wishes of the pontiff. But while he was on this expedition, an incident occurred which did him considerable damage, and wellnigh caused the destruction of his army. A tempest, followed by heavy rains, had arisen while he was encamped by the Tiber, near its source in the Apennines. From the insignificance of the stream in this place, it had never occurred to him that it might be swollen so as to damage his army; and though the waters descended like a torrent from the neighbouring mountains, he remained in security in his camp. But here, as in the Genoese expedition, he was saved by the courtesy of a lady. Eufrosina, the noble proprietrix of a city in the neighbourhood, was well acquainted with the nature of the river in this spot, and having experienced the inundations that invariably followed such weather, she sent to warn the general of his impending catastrophe. Her messengers arrived just as he, unaware of the danger, was about to sit down to

dinner. Even after this warning he was unable to bring off his army without great loss of men, horses, and baggage; for the river had already begun to overflow its banks and to flood the neighbouring country. The greatest terror prevailed; it was impossible to preserve any sort of discipline: some were anxious to save their horses, others tried to bring their armour out of their tents; darkness added to the confusion of the scene; and when day broke, Sforza ascertained that the Tiber had done him more damage than he had ever sustained from an enemy.

After this catastrophe it was found necessary to make a halt of several days to restore order in the camp. But notwithstanding this disaster, and the consequent delay, he managed to cross the Apennines, and, in spite of the inferiority of his force, to keep Piccinino in check on the river Savio, and even to gain some advantages over him in skirmishes fought on its banks. But he received a reverse in another quarter. As soon as Fortebraccio had ascertained that he had divided his forces, he withdrew a certain portion of the garrisons from the strong places in the States of the Church, and brought them to attack that division of the army which he had left under Leo near Assisi. The latter, being taken by surprise, was completely defeated, and he himself was taken prisoner.

The captivity of his brother, and the loss of a large portion of his army, considerably affected the spirits of Sforza; and the vicinity of his victorious opponent to

the territories he himself had so recently acquired, filled him with alarm. He therefore turned his chief attention to the operations in that quarter. For this reason, though he had lately received considerable reinforcements from the Venetians, he merely kept in Flaminia a body of troops sufficient to enable him to act on the defensive, and he despatched the rest of his available troops, under two of his ablest officers, to support his brother, Alexander Sforza, who still remained in Umbria. The latter availed himself of this fresh infusion of strength to march against Fortebraccio, who occupied the heights which overlook the town of Camerino. In spite of the strength of his position, Alexander succeeded in making himself master of it. After the troops on the summit were routed by their victorious aggressors, their general, while endeavouring to effect his escape on horseback, tried to ride over some uneven ground on the side of the mountain road, which was blocked up by the fugitive soldiers. While making this attempt, he was closely pursued by a mounted officer of the enemy. In one place, the horses both of the pursuer and the fugitive, who were equally careless of the nature of the ground they were traversing, rolled over together. The former was comparatively unhurt, while the latter was considerably shaken by his fall, and, when forced to fight hand to hand with his opponent, could offer but a feeble resistance. After having been easily overcome, he was brought, more dead than alive, into the camp of Alexander, where he expired, much in the same circumstances as those under which, ten years before,

his master, Braccio da Montone, had terminated his career. The victorious general after this marched to Assisi to liberate Leo from captivity, and to continue the siege which had been begun by his brother. The inhabitants of that place, having no longer any hope of succour from without, made a voluntary surrender to the pope, merely stipulating that the son and the property of Fortebraccio's widow should be respected.

The defeat and the death of Fortebraccio left Francesco Sforza at liberty to bring all his forces against Nicolo Piccinino. Even when his army had been divided, that general had not been able to gain any advantage over him, and it did not seem likely that he could withstand him, now that his large accession of force would enable him to act on the offensive. For this reason his employer, the duke of Milan, was glad to avail himself of the mediation of the marquis of Este to come to terms with his enemies. He agreed to relinquish all the places that Piccinino had taken in Romagna, and to withdraw his troops from that province.

It now merely remained for Francesco Sforza to reduce Bologna to the allegiance of Eugenius, which, as the antipapal party was no longer succoured by the Milanese troops, he found no difficulty in doing. He then led his forces to Cotignola, the birthplace of his father, and thence he betook himself to Florence. He was there received with the most marked attention, both by the pope and the people, in whose services he

had been engaged. And though he had plenty of serious matters to occupy his mind, he managed to gain the affections of the latter by giving tournaments, and by being present at all their diversions. Here, too, he laid the foundations of that intimacy with Cosmo de' Medici, which lasted through life.

CHAPTER IV.

DEATH OF JOAN II. AT NAPLES.—CLAIMANTS FOR THE CROWN.—ALPHONSO OF ARAGON DEFEATED AND TAKEN PRISONER BY THE GENOESE—IS LIBERATED BY PHILIP.—CHANGE IN PHILIP'S POLICY.—REVOLT OF THE GENOESE.—NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE FLORENTINE EXILES AND PHILIP. —ATTEMPTS OF EUGENIUS TO GET RID OF FRANCESCO SFORZA.—CONDUCT OF THE LATTER—DEFEATS NICOLO PICCININO IN TUSCANY—ATTEMPTS TO TAKE LUCCA—ORDERED TO MARCH INTO LOMBARDY—REFUSES TO CROSS THE PO.—ANGER OF THE VENETIANS.—THREATS OF SFORZA.— PEACE.

WHILE Sforza was at Florence enjoying the honours due to his past successes, and forming friendships and negotiating plans for the future, events happened at Naples which began to attract the attention of the leading men of Italy. In November 1434 died Louis of Anjou, the adopted heir of the queen of Naples. René, his nearest relation, and the head of the house of Anjou, was chosen by her in his place. But when the death of Louis became known to Alphonso of Aragon, he determined to try to regain by courtesy what he had failed to do by arms ; and for this purpose he took up his quarters at Ischia, whence he sent many flattering messages to the queen. But she, though she returned them with civility, made no alteration in her will ; and at the end of the year the king of Aragon signed a treaty of ten years' duration with her, and departed. But after her death, which took place in the following

February, he determined to maintain by arms his rights as the descendant of Constance, the daughter of Manfred, against those of the house of Anjou. He was supported in his pretensions by many of the Neapolitan provincial nobles, while his rival, René of Anjou, was the favourite with the inhabitants of the capital. There was also a third claimant to the vacant crown. Eugenius, emboldened by his success in the last war, was unwilling to neglect the opportunity of reviving the claim of the Holy See to the kingdoms of Apulia and Calabria, which had been, one century and a half ago, invariably asserted by the pontiffs, but which, during their absence in Avignon, and the contentions that followed their return, had been suffered to lie dormant. Accordingly, he declared the kingdom a tributary province of the Holy See, and said that he would send Vitellius, the patriarch of Alessandria, to take possession of it. But neither the pope nor the patriarch found favour in the eyes of the people.

The possession of the island of Sicily gave Alphonso a considerable advantage when he came to contend with his opponent. At the instigation of the duke of Sessa, and other nobles of his party, he sailed thence with a considerable armament for Gaeta. The inhabitants of that city, like those of Naples, were in favour of René; and fearing lest they should not be able to withstand the Aragonese forces, they demanded assistance from Philip and the Genoese. In compliance with their request, the duke sent to their aid a small force of three hundred foot, under Francesco Spinola, along with an

ambassador, to plead the cause of René among the magnates of the land. At the same time, he requested the Genoese to send succours by sea, and they, always retaining their hereditary enmity to the Aragonese, and being anxious to save the city of Gaeta, in which they had much of their merchandise, from being pillaged by them, sent thither a fleet of twenty-two ships. They met the Aragonese near the island of Ponza, and by the superiority of their naval tactics they gained a complete victory, in which they captured or destroyed all the enemy's ships, with the exception of one commanded by Peter of Aragon. Alphonso himself, as well as his ally John, king of Navarre, and his infant sons, along with several of the *élite* of the Neapolitan noblesse, fell into their hands. Blasio, the admiral of the Genoese fleet, after he had sailed to Gaeta in triumph, brought his royal captives to Milan, and placed them at the disposal of the duke.

This victory redoubled the apprehensions of those who had for some time past been so jealous of the ambition and the increasing power of Philip. But on the arrival of the royal prisoners at Milan, an unexpected change took place in his policy. The courtesy with which he received, and the hospitality with which he treated, his captives, has been celebrated by all the historians of the period. But he did not confine his good treatment of them to kindly words or empty civilities. During their many interviews, Alphonso endeavoured to convince him of the impolicy of supporting René against himself, reminding him that it

would be the first object of a king of the house of Anjou to have his countrymen and his allies established in the north of Italy, and to reduce Milan to a dependency of France; while, on the other hand, it would be his interest, both as king of Aragon and of Naples, to maintain and to strengthen such a formidable barrier against the encroachments of those to whom he was politically opposed; that, as it would be in the power of the sovereigns at Milan at any time to facilitate the entry of the French into his dominions, he would have tolerable security for his fidelity, and obedience to his wishes; and if he might be a sovereign in name, Philip would be in reality the chief ruler of the kingdom of Naples; that if the duke of Milan had René of Anjou on one side, and the king of France on the other, he must either lose his dominions, or at best live in perpetual fear of two such neighbours; whereas his own success would render him the virtual sovereign of the peninsula. These arguments produced their desired effect on the astute mind of the duke. Alphonso was liberated, and conducted with great honour as far as Genoa, whence he was sent back to his own kingdom. He shortly afterwards went again to Gaeta, which had fallen into the hands of his partisans as soon as the altered views of the duke of Milan had become known.

The change in the policy of Philip caused the greatest disgust among the Genoese. They recollected that it was at his instigation that they had sent the fleet to Gaeta, and borne the first brunt and cost of the war; they now saw with indignation that they were used as a

mere cat's-paw by that monarch; they deemed their glory tarnished by the fruits of their victory being thus thrown away; and they thought their commercial interests endangered by the re-entrance of the Aragonese into Gaeta. Francesco Spinola, one of their leading citizens, had been among the foremost to bring the republic under the duke; nevertheless, he was one of the first to fall under his suspicion. From the part he had taken in the affair at Gaeta, he participated in no small degree in the dissatisfaction of his countrymen, and he resolved to join them in an effort to throw off a yoke which had become distasteful to all. The day chosen for the attempt was that of the entrance of a new governor into the city, which happened on the feast of the Baptist. On his arrival in the principal piazza, in company with the former governor and several citizens, Spinola rushed forth from his house, followed by a number of friends all well armed, and raised the cry of liberty. It was wonderful with what celerity the citizens flocked together, on hearing this magic and often much-abused word. The place became so crowded that the partisans of the duke could do nothing—they had even great difficulty in providing for their safety: the new governor effected his escape into the citadel; the ex-governor was killed, while endeavouring to fly into the palace and call out the guards. The people followed up their success by electing the popular magistrates according to the established forms of the ancient republic. In a few days afterwards they made themselves masters of the citadel, along with other places

that had been in the possession of the Milanese, and once more became entirely free.

This revolt of the Genoese elated the spirits of those enemies of the duke who had been terrified by their successes against the Aragonese. The Venetians and Florentines watched their proceedings with interest, and were glad to form an alliance with them. Those two old wranglers, the maritime republics of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, were willing to make truce, and to unite, through fear of one whom they now deemed their common enemy. The then state of things also brought together other people who had been formerly opposed. Rinaldo degli Albizzi and his friends, who had been driven from Florence after the return of the Medici, when they beheld the formation of this new alliance, began to entertain hopes of returning to their country; and with the view of facilitating their designs, they endeavoured to persuade Philip to declare war against the party who had driven them thence.

The arguments Rinaldo made use of on this occasion are detailed by Machiavelli* in a style equal to that of the first authors of antiquity. Their chief purport was as follows:—Though he and his friends had always acted with those who were opposed to the ambition of the Visconti, he had now many excellent reasons to justify his proposal. The patriotism which had prompted him to the course he formerly pursued was also the leading principle of his present line of conduct: as he then wished to preserve his country from foreign aggres-

* *Storia di Fiorenze*, lib. v.

sion, he now desired to free it from domestic tyranny. Bodies politic, he said, in some respects resembled the human body, in which sores sometimes broke out that could not be healed without burning or cutting; and there could be no greater sore in any body than the slavery now existing in his country, which demanded a very stringent remedy. The duke would now have justice on his side, as the Florentines had not scrupled, in the face of a treaty ratified with the greatest solemnity, to join the Genoese in their rebellion. He need not be discouraged by want of success in bygone wars, inasmuch as the people had neither the power nor the perseverance they formerly had; for what power could they have, after they had banished the best and the wealthiest of their citizens?—or how could perseverance be looked for in a people kept disunited by faction? Finally, if he succeeded in restoring him to his country, he would for ever after be able to count upon him as his most grateful ally; and he would never have another such opportunity of gaining to his friendship a state which had always more than any other presented the most formidable obstacles to the aggrandisement of his house.

It did not require much force of argument to persuade Filippo Maria, influenced as he was by a blind ambition and a hereditary hatred to the Florentines, to adopt the course suggested by Rinaldo; but prudence, and the recollection of former reverses, made him at first cautious in his mode of attack. Nicolo Piccinino had been despatched by him against the Genoese; and he, though he gained some advantage over them in the

country, was unable to make any impression against the city. The duke, finding that he was only wasting his time there, ordered him to carry on the war in that part of Liguria that joins Tuscany, so as to threaten the territory of Pisa. He hoped in this manner to show the Florentines what they must expect if they continued their alliance with the rebellious Genoese. Agreeably to his instructions, Piccinino took the town of Sarzana, and prepared to enter the territory of Lucca, under pretence of marching to the assistance of Alphonso, in the kingdom of Naples. The Florentines, of course, could not permit this, and were about to declare war. However, with a view if possible to stave off actual hostilities, Pope Eugenius went from Florence to have an interview with the duke at Bologna, and represented to him that, if he persevered in his aggressions, he would be obliged to place the services of his gonfaloniere, Francesco Sforza, at the disposal of his enemies. Philip, however, would listen to no compromise which did not include the restoration of Genoa; and the other two republics refused to abandon their ally in such critical circumstances.

While these things were going on among the potentates of Italy, Francesco Sforza was engaged, as standard-bearer of the church, in reducing some rebel towns for the pope, and enlarging his own dominions in the province of Umbria. The details of his proceedings are generally uninteresting, and would not be worth recording, if they did not bring to light one or two instances of the double-dealing of Eugenius and others, peculiarly

illustrative of the morality of the times. His first acquisition of territory was the town of Fabriano, in the Apennines, the inhabitants of which, having cruelly massacred their rulers, purchased immunity from the consequence of their crimes by surrendering their liberties to, and claiming the protection of, the first captain of the period. After having quelled a revolt of the Camerines, and reduced several strongholds in the vicinity, he betook himself to his recent conquest of Fabriano, and continued going through the cities of his territory till he received orders from the pope to attack Forli. Before obeying this mandate, he sent three days' notice of his intentions to Antonio Ordelaffi, the signor of that town. While engaged in this enterprise, an incident occurred to him indicative of his popularity with all classes. While at a considerable distance from his camp he was surprised and surrounded by a party of armed men, who had sallied forth on a foraging expedition from Forli. When he was recognised, one of the leaders of the party took him by the hand, and told him to fear nothing from them; they were well aware that he had attacked their city in obedience to the orders of others; and so far from wishing him any harm, they would even expose themselves to defend him from danger.* After he had reduced this and other places, he went to Bologna to watch the movements of Piccinino, who was then in the territory of Parma.

But by this time Eugenius, having quelled his rebellious subjects, and expelled from his territories his

* Simoneta, lib. iv.

enemies, began to repent of the favours that he had conferred upon Sforza. From the conduct of that general previous to his receiving the marquisate of Ancona, it was evident that it must have been the direst necessity that had compelled the pope to patronise him; and, indeed, from the rapid growth of his dominions, there now appeared too much reason to fear lest, in the manner adverted to one century later by Machiavelli,* he should aspire to greatness by the destruction either of his employer or of those whom his employer wished to preserve. But being unable to get rid of him in the manner that the Venetians had freed themselves from Carmagnola, when they dreaded a similar result, he determined to attempt his ruin by other means. For this purpose he formed, with one Baldassar Offidano—a man of as little principle as any of that period, and peculiarly jealous of Sforza—a plan in which it was arranged that Baldassar should ask Sforza to place a part of his troops at his disposal, for the purpose of expelling some usurpers from some castles in Romagna. Sforza, though surprised at the request, and thinking it in some measure derogatory to his dignity, did not hesitate to comply with it when it was backed by Eugenius. Baldassar, when he had thus abstracted part of Sforza's forces, wrote word to Nicolo Piccinino that his great rival in the art of war was in an almost defenceless state in the neighbourhood of Bologna, and might be easily crushed. At the same time, he promised to join in an attack on him with what troops he

* *Principe*, cap. 12.

had at his disposal. But about this period an incident happened, which must have tended to soften Piccinino's animosity to him, and may, perhaps, have prevented him joining these insidious plots of his enemies. Two soldiers of the former made their way into his rival's camp near Bologna, and offered, for a sum of money, to assassinate their general. For this Sforza reprimanded them in the severest terms, adding, at the same time, that it was by arms, and not by treachery, that he wished to conquer. Whether Piccinino was aware of this or not, it is certain that he continued to turn a deaf ear to the suggestions of Baldassar.

Baldassar then resolved to try another method to get rid of the man whom he feared and hated. It happened that the camp of Sforza was pitched on the banks of the river Reno, in the immediate vicinity of a bridge which was commanded by a tower. The general was in the frequent habit of marching about in front of his camp without his arms, and might easily be despatched by arrows or javelins from an ambush. Baldassar, being aware of the manner in which he exposed himself, had introduced into the tower twelve men armed with bows and javelins, who were ordered to watch their opportunity to murder him; and it is not improbable that they might have accomplished their nefarious design, if he had not received timely warning of his danger, and immediately changed his quarters.

As soon as Baldassar had heard that his intended victim had escaped from all the snares he had laid for him, he wrote a letter to Nicolo Piccinino, full of

reproaches for having neglected such an opportunity of crushing his own and the pope's greatest enemy. The letter having been intercepted and brought to Sforza, left no doubts in his mind as to who had been the real authors of the mischief. On this he immediately marched with his army to the camp of Baldassar, and, declaring that he only wished to take vengeance on the traitor, summoned all his soldiers who were along with him to surrender. Many of them obeyed; but some, who had always shown the greatest jealousy of the pope's gonfaloniere, determined to remain with his enemy. Sforza lost no time in attacking the refractory soldiers; and having gained an easy victory, he pursued Baldassar as far as the fortress of Bruti. The owners of the fortress were induced, by the threats of the victorious general, to give up the refugee, who was found with his face covered with flour, and clothed in woman's apparel. The instant he was recognised he was brought forth and delivered to his indignant enemy. He was subsequently confined in a fortress, where he lost his life by the accident, as was said, of a tile falling on his head.

Having thus taken vengeance on one who had been the chief agent in all the machinations against him, Sforza behaved with great generosity towards Eugenius, who, he must have known, was Baldassar's instigator throughout. An opportunity of aggrandising himself at his expense soon presented itself. The anti-papal party in Bologna, when the circumstances of the pope's treachery, and Sforza's discovery of it, had come to their ears, thought that they now beheld a favourable

opportunity of throwing off the power of the former, and putting themselves under the protection of the latter. Accordingly, they made an offer of their city to him. But as he did not deem himself yet in a position to set up as an independent sovereign, or to maintain armies at his own expense, it was still expedient for him to retain his place as commander of the forces of the Holy See, and to hold his acquisitions in the March under the sanction of the pope; and he thought it not improbable that an open rupture with him might disturb his relations with the Venetians and Florentines. So he not only declined the offers made to him by the Bolognese, but he even carried his magnanimity so far as to pretend to give credence to the excuses and the protestations of innocence that were made by Eugenius.

Francesco Sforza, after he had thus enlarged his dominions and chastised his enemies, without quarrelling with the man whose protection he needed, was called upon once more to fight against the sovereign who had adopted him as a son. As he was swayed by the same reasons as on a former occasion, he did not hesitate to obey, and was declared general of the forces of the combined republics. He was first ordered against Nicolo Piccinino, who, while the pope was engaged in negotiation, had been allowed to take several places in Tuscany without opposition, and was now laying siege to Barga. While he was there, Francesco Sforza attacked him at a moment that he least expected it, and completely routed his forces. On this occasion Louis, the son of Francesco Gonzaga of Mantua, was

taken prisoner by the victorious general; and though offered his liberty, he preferred attaching himself to him, and fighting under his banner — so popular had he become with all who were not jealous of his rising reputation.

Shortly afterwards, Nicolo Piccinino was recalled from Tuscany, with orders to march against the army of the Venetians commanded by the older Gonzaga; and Sforza availed himself of his absence to recover for the Florentines all the cities that he had taken. Emboldened by the success of their armies and the reputation of their general, the Florentines thought this a favourable opportunity of resuming their darling project of the conquest of Lucca. To accomplish their desires, Francesco Sforza entered the territory of the devoted republic with his army in the spring of the year 1437, laid waste their land, burned their houses and their trees, and took several of their cities. Among the latter was the town of Casanova, after the capture of which, the victorious general exhibited an instance of self-restraint, which, considering the times in which he lived, redounds much to his credit.* However, the

* "Cum et mulieres et virgines non militiæ solum primoribus, sed ipsis quoque infimæ conditionis famulis permitterentur, puella quædam facie liberali ac venustâ militum manibus ad explendam libidinem trahebatur. Hæc inter lacrymas crebrâ voce clamabat, 'Ego me ipsi Francisco Comiti dico.' Quod audientes milites ne ducis iram adversus se concitarent, abstinuerant omni in puellam contumeliâ ac maleficio, eamque perduxerunt ad Franciscum, tunc et juventutis ardore et corporis temperamento ad libidinem venereasque illecebras proclivem, et militari consuetudine nihil so turpe ob id admissurum existimantem. Is puellam intuitus ejusque formâ ac pulcritudine non mediocriter illectus, ne quid tamen admitteret quod accusari posset, quæsivit ex eâ num ita esset animata ut sibi morem gereret potius quàm iis prostitueretur, a quibus esset deducta. Illa '*parata sum*,' inquit, '*omnibus*

Lucchese were not daunted either by the name or the fortunes of Sforza, or by the damages they had already sustained at his hands. As the hostile army approached their walls, they strengthened the fortifications by every possible means; and hoping that they would ultimately be relieved by the duke of Milan, or that the Florentines would, for some reason or other, be obliged to draw off their army, they made up their minds to resist to the last. At the head of the party determined to maintain the liberty of the state were the leading nobles: for themselves they feared nothing; their only dread was lest the populace, disgusted at the losses they had already sustained, and were still sustaining, should be influenced more by dangers that were pressing than

in rebus tuæ obsequi voluntati, modo me ab horum manibus eripias.' Quibus auditis, Franciscus jussit eam duci intra prætorium atque diligenter servari. Cumque ad multam jam noctem concessisset in cubiculum ubi puella continebatur, eam omnium primùm rogavit rursùs, an eodem esset animo, quo anteà in se fore annuisset. Cumque illa in priore sententiâ persistens se omnibus rebus ei libentissimè pariturum respondisset, jubet, ut exuta vestibus ad tunicam usque se transferret in lectum, idemque ipse continuò facit. Cùmque jam in virginem incaluisset, illa verecunda et magnâ cum reverentiâ, facie confestim oculisque conversis ad proximam Virginis Mariæ imaginem quæ de more in cubiculo servabatur, ait, *'O Domine mi, per intemeratam illam Virginem Mariam Salvatoris nostri Genetricem, te etiam atque etiam oro et obtestor ne me violes, ne me incontinenter attractes, neque virginitatem meam, quæ mihi animâ ipsâ carior est, polluas, sed intactam potiùs, et nullâ turpitudinis labe inquinatam sponso meo, quem habes captivum atque vinctum per tuam clementiam et per divinam misericordiam restituas.'* Quæ quidem verba Francisci animum tantoperè permoverunt, ut omnem vim libidinis illicò suppresserint, flammasque restinxerint. Puellam tamen interroganti, quare anteà non modò non petenti verùm ne cogitanti quidem ad suam se voluptatem tradidisset, fertur, non ineptè quidem illam respondisse, se vulgò jam pridem audisse, nihil esse apud eum justitiâ ac pietate antiquius, quarum se virtutum spe fictam, ea pro tempore locutam, quæ sibi tandem suæque honestati usui forent. Quibus verbis Franciscus majore in Virginem pietate commisserationeque commotus, jussit eam bono esse animo, quæ nullam esset injuriam passura, sed suum etiam sponsum, qui apud gregarios milites quosdam

by the hope of liberty, and compel them to some ignominious surrender. In order to secure their adherence, they made them assemble in one of the chief places of the town, and there reminded them of the many unsuccessful attempts that Florence had already made against their liberties; of the friendship that had existed for so many generations between their state and the Visconti; and the certainty that the present representative of that family would never let them fall into the hands of his most inveterate enemies; finally, that they would gain no material advantage by a surrender, for, if they lost their liberty, they would never again be allowed to reap the fruits of their own industry; but that, if they made their enemies feel how vain were their

captivus erat in vinculis, confestim assecutura. Id quod etiam Franciscus effecit. Nam suâ pecuniâ sponsum redemit, qui cum esset coram adductus, et tristi lacrymabilique vultu sponsam 'intueretur, quòd putaret eam esse compressam, leniter illa verecundèque subridens, '*Noli*,' inquit, '*sponse mi, quidquam de meâ pudicitia subrereri. Nam hujus clementissimi Principis bonitate et gratiâ, eadem ipsa nunc sum, qualis eram ante captivitatem.*' Tum etiam Franciscus, re cognitâ, sanctè constantissimèque juravit nullam a se puellam, nec ab alio quopiam passam esse injuriam. Quibus, Sponsus, auditis, sublatus ad cœlum manibus, atque genu flexo, quàm maximè potuit, Francisco gratias agens; '*Tu*,' inquit, '*mi Domine, non fallis eam quæ de te est fama apud omnes pulcherrima. Nemo enim te inter homines neque humanior est, neque clementior. Referat tibi Deus omnipotens quæ ipsi non possumus digna meritis tuis præmia.*' Jusserat interim Franciscus multam in medium supellectilem comportari quam ex eâ municipii direptione fuerat per suos milites domesticos consecutus. Hanc cum puellæ adderret in dotem, eam illa nequaquam accepit, sed gratias agens, inquit: '*Maxima sunt tua in nos beneficia, Princeps clarissime. Verùm hanc ego supellectilem si acciperem, judicarent omnes vicini eam essa prostratæ castitatis mercedem. At ipsa eo sum animo, ut mori malim quàm infamiâ hujusmodi laborari.*' Tùm Franciscus liberali atrosque exceptos convivio, eosdemque laudatos demisit." —SIMONETA, lib. iv. The whole story so much resembles one told of Scipio by Livy, xxvi. 50, that one might almost suspect that it was framed by Simoneta for the purpose of showing that his master was a second Scipio in moral as well as military virtue.

attempts to subdue them, they would scarcely be again subject to the inconvenience they were now experiencing.

These arguments produced their due effect upon the mind of the populace. Though Sforza pressed the siege with great vigour, and carried one position after another, they never wavered in their resolution. At length, when dangers were augmenting on all sides, they sent intelligence to the duke of the real state of their case, reminding him that, though they were determined not to lose their liberties except with their lives, yet, if he allowed his friends to fall a sacrifice to the ambition of others, he would lose his own honour, and the fidelity of those who might at any time be called upon to risk anything for him; adding, that if he was not actuated by any sense of obligation, at least compassion for their sufferings should induce him to afford them assistance. Philip, moved as well by these representations as by his inveterate dislike of the Florentines, determined to make a diversion in their favour. There were two ways in which this might be done—either by an invasion of Tuscany, or by directing such a vigorous attack against the Venetians that the Florentines would be obliged to send Sforza to their assistance. It was not long ere the latter were alarmed by the report of an army being about their own territory. At the same time they received ambassadors from the Venetians, informing them of their leader Francesco Gonzaga having deserted to the duke, and their inability to carry on the war without their most vigorous co-operation. The Venetians also, as they had sustained

several defeats from Nicolo Piccinino, were particularly anxious that Francesco Sforza, the only man in Italy capable of opposing him, should put himself at the head of their army.

The Florentines were in a great strait on the receipt of this intelligence. On the one hand, they feared the duke, and wished for nothing so much as to strike a decisive blow at his power; on the other hand, they were above all things anxious to conquer Lucca; and they suspected, not without reason, that, in asking for the services of Sforza, the Venetians were in no small degree influenced by jealousy of their probable success in that quarter. However, the former feeling prevailed, and they yielded their general to the solicitations of their allies. Sforza, in obedience to the orders that were sent to him, after he had left garrisons in all the fortified places he had taken in the vicinity of Lucca, crossed the Apennines and went to Reggio. But here a difficulty occurred, which put a stop to the progress of the allies. Francesco Sforza asserted that he had made a private agreement with the duke of Milan never to invade his dominions north of the Po. Whether this was really the case or not, cannot now be ascertained; but it is not difficult to divine the motives of his conduct. When he first fought on the side opposed to the duke, the latter seemed likely to overturn the balance of power, and to threaten the independent existence of the different states in Italy; and as he himself now aspired to be the sovereign of a new principality, it was above all things important for him that the indepen-

dence of the different states and the general balance of power should be preserved. But the maintenance of this balance did not require that the person who once threatened to destroy it should be deprived of any portion of his lawful territories; and Sforza had the strongest reason for preserving the integrity of the state of which he still expected the reversion. He still looked for favour from the duke: the changes of party in Italy were so frequent that he might possibly need his protection; and it might be useful to him to be able to claim it on the same grounds that the great Athenian general did that of the king of Persia, when he wrote to him to say that, though he had done his father more injury than any other Greek while he was invading the shores of his country, he had done him still more good, inasmuch as he had allowed him to return in safety after the battle of Salamis.*

The stedfast adherence of Francesco Sforza to this resolution in no small degree irritated the Venetians, and embarrassed their relations with the Florentines. The latter vainly endeavoured to accommodate the differences between their general and their allies. To the former they represented that he surely might act as required, if he were to write a public manifesto expressive of his reasons; that no private promise could be as binding as public engagements; and that, if he were once to declare his willingness to concede this point to the

* "Θεμιστοκλῆς ἥκω παρὰ σέ, ὃς κακὰ μὲν πλεῖστα Ἑλλήνων εἴργασμαι τὸν ὑμέτερον δικον ὅσον χρόνον τόν σον πάτερα επιόντα ἔμοι ἀνάγκῃ ἠμυνόμην πόλυδε ἔτι πλέιω ἄγαθα ἐπειδη ἐν τῷ ἀσφαλεῖ μὲν ἐμοὶ, ἐκέινῳδ' εν επικινδύνῳ παλὶν ἡ ἀποκοδιμὴ ἐγίγνετο."—Thucydides, i.

Venetians, he might never be required actually to cross the Po. To the latter they wrote word, that as their general was bound to obey the promise he had made, and would, under any circumstances, be reluctant to proceed to extremities against the father of his betrothed, they hoped they would be content to confine the scene of their operations to the right bank of the Po. But on this point both parties were inflexible. Sforza had scarcely arrived at Reggio when he received an order from the Venetians to form a junction with their forces to the north of the river, and this he positively declined to do. His inflexibility on this point was the cause of a serious dispute between Andreas Mauroceno, the Venetian ambassador, and himself; each accused the other of selfishness and faithlessness: the former threatened to withhold all arrears of pay, if the wishes of his country were not complied with, and the latter declared his intention of quitting their service altogether. After fruitless attempts at negotiation, both parties departed in disgust—the former to Venice, the latter to the vicinity of Pisa.

On Sforza's return to Tuscany the Florentines again turned their attention to Lucca, and requested him to complete the conquest of that place. But Philip had already become informed of his conduct with regard to the passing of the Po, and seeing the hold he had over him, he determined to turn it to farther account. He therefore requested Sforza to negotiate a peace between the Lucchese and the Florentines, and at the same time gave him to understand that he him-

self was ready enough to come to terms with the latter. Sforza, being quite willing to purchase the goodwill of the duke by compliance on this point, dexterously managed to postpone the prosecution of the war. When urged on the subject, he declared he would do nothing till he received all arrears of pay from the Venetians, and that, if he was not properly supported by them, he must turn his attention to the safety of his dominions, and come to terms with the duke independently of others.

The tricks and the threats of Francesco Sforza were a source of great alarm to the Florentines. They already looked upon the conquest of Lucca as hopeless, and they even began to tremble for their independence in the event of his proposed union with the duke. In order to set matters right they sent Cosmo de' Medici to the Venetians, trusting much to his universal popularity, and to the friendship they had shown him during the period of his exile. He made a long oration in their senate on the then state of Italy, the power of the duke, and the talents of Sforza, and added that, if the two latter were once united, the Venetians would be driven back to the sea, and they themselves would have to fight for their very existence. But the Venetians remained firm in their refusal to pay Sforza. They said, that if the Florentines set such high value on his services, they should pay him themselves; that they knew their own resources as well as those of their enemies, and were confident, under any circumstances, of being able to maintain their position; that Sforza seemed to

set no bounds to ambition—there was no saying what he might next ask, if they once consented to pay him without receiving a full equivalent of service; and that there was nothing that they so much desired as to humble his power, already too great.

Though the mission of Cosmo was fruitless, the Florentines still left no means untried to preserve the adherence of Francesco Sforza to the league. He himself seems to have continued undecided as to the part he should take, till an event occurred which induced him to come to terms with the duke of Milan. Intelligence was brought to him that the captain whom he had left in charge of his territories in Umbria had deserted him, and gone over to the duke; and as he could not leave them unprotected, he negotiated a peace between Philip and the Florentines, in which it was settled that the duke should not interfere in the affairs of Romagna or Tuscany. At the same time he arranged terms between the Florentines and the Lucchese, in which it was agreed that the former might continue to hold Monte Carlo, and some strong cities that had been taken by him; and that the latter should be guaranteed in the full enjoyment of their independence. For the part he had taken in these negotiations he received from the duke the towns of Asti and Dertona, in the north-west of Lombardy. At the same time Philip renewed his promises of bestowing on him the hand of his daughter, and gave him his permission to serve under whatever banner he pleased, provided he was not actually opposed to him.

CHAPTER V.

SFORZA'S POSITION.—WAR IN THE NEAPOLITAN PROVINCES.—UNCERTAIN CONDUCT OF THE DUKE OF MILAN.—REVERSES OF THE VENETIANS.—COALITION AGAINST PHILIP.—COMMAND GIVEN TO SFORZA.—SFORZA GOES INTO LOMBARDY—RELIEVES VERONA.—VENETIAN FLEET ON LAKE GARDA DEFEATED.—SFORZA'S VICTORY AT TENNA.—PICCININO ENTERS VERONA —IS EXPELLED THENCE BY SFORZA.

WHATEVER may be thought of Sforza's principles, it must be allowed that, in the events just narrated, he had managed to act with the greatest dexterity. In the province of Ancona, which properly belonged to the pope, and which was coveted by the duke of Milan, he had erected a principality for himself with the formal sanction of the former, and without quarrelling with the latter. He had effectually thwarted the intrigues of Eugenius, without coming to an open rupture with him when it did not suit his convenience. Though he had on several occasions opposed the armies of the duke, and had actually accepted the chief command of the forces of the coalition that had been formed against him, he obtained from him a renewal of his promise of the hand of his daughter. The influence which he had acquired in Italy was so great that he was able to negotiate a peace between the belligerent powers of Florence; and though by so doing he curried

favour with Filippo Maria Visconti, he seems in no way to have weakened Cosmo de' Medici's friendship for himself, which was so often of use to him in the subsequent events of his life. It now remains to be seen how he enforced the performance of the duke's promise, when it appeared to him that it ought no longer to be deferred.

The peace which he himself had arranged left him at liberty to attend to the affairs of his new principality. In this he displayed his usual talent and discretion. He reduced some towns that had revolted, and by his mere presence confirmed the allegiance of many that were supposed to be wavering. The details of his proceedings, however, are totally void of interest.

The attention of all Italy was now directed to the war which had broken out in the kingdom of Naples. One of the rivals for the crown, René of Anjou, was now a prisoner in the hands of the duke of Burgundy, but his wife Elizabeth had gone to Naples to organise his party. Alphonso, too, after his liberation by Philip, had lost no time in repairing to the scene of action. The pope having withdrawn his own pretensions to the vacant crown, followed the policy of his predecessors in supporting the house of Anjou, and ordered his legate, Vitellius, to give Elizabeth all the assistance in his power. The conduct of the duke of Milan at this juncture was extremely wavering and uncertain, and can only be accounted for on the supposition that he wished his enemies to weaken themselves by mutual wars, while he himself was recruiting his resources in

peace. In the words of Muratori, "He made a promise one day to break it the next. The passions of ambition and vengeance were so strong in his heart that no settlement could extinguish them. He was familiar with all sorts of tricks and cabals, to do injury to another, and afterwards to prove himself innocent of all offence." At this time he affected a friendship for Eugenius, but did his utmost to stir up a party against him at the Council of Basle. With all his professions of goodwill for Sforza, there is very little doubt of his having endeavoured to set Eugenius against him, and his having stirred up rebellion among his fiefs and his generals. And though he had liberated Alphonso of Aragon from captivity, and promised him his support, he now requested Sforza to make a demonstration in favour of René of Anjou. Shortly afterwards, when Alphonso had begun to fear the opposition of Sforza, he requested the Florentines to order the latter to desist, making use of threats in the event of their refusing. And he crowned his treachery against the pope by sending Piccinino to obtain money from him, for the avowed purpose of restoring to him the fiefs of Sforza, and ordering his general to make use of the supplies so obtained to befriend the revolutionary party in Bologna and Ravenna, and then to prosecute his conquests in the whole province of Romagna.

It was evident that, as long as this firebrand existed, no peace could be of any duration in Italy. The other powers at this time seem to have been desirous of repose: the Florentines were content to abide by the terms they had made with the Lucchese, as also by

those which Sforza had arranged with the duke of Milan; and Sforza himself seems to have wished for nothing so much as to maintain a good understanding with all parties, so as to be able to attend to his own affairs in the province of Ancona. As René of Anjou had never been very anxious about following up his claims, and was now a prisoner in the hands of the duke of Burgundy, the contention for the crown of Naples seemed likely to come to a speedy termination. And though there is no account of any truce having been established between Philip and the Venetians, yet the war in that quarter had for some time been carried on languidly enough. Eugenius could do nothing for himself, and, if unassisted by others, must be compelled to lick, though he might loathe, the hand of his standard-bearer, who had deprived him of half his dominions. But the ambition of the duke was insatiable; he could not endure that the Venetians should remain in possession of Brescia and Verona; and now that they were abandoned by the Florentines, he determined on making a vigorous effort to expel them. Moreover, he entertained the design of making himself completely master of the whole of Romagna, by which means he might keep the pope, the Florentines, and the marquis of Ancona in check. He trusted also that the resentment which the Florentines and Sforza, each for different reasons, still harboured against the Venetians, the hopes that the latter cherished of obtaining the hand of his daughter, and the mutual distrust which he had endeavoured to diffuse among his

former opponents, would prevent the formation of another coalition against him.

In the mean time Nicolo Piccinino continued to obey Philip's orders in Romagna. Having made himself master of Ravenna and Bologna, he proceeded to the attack of other places; and after a short time he took all the strongholds therein that once belonged to the pope. To justify his proceedings to the other powers of Italy, he pretended to have discovered that Eugenius was carrying on intrigues with the Venetians, in direct violation of the agreement that he had made with his master. On his part, Philip declared that his general was pursuing his career of conquest in Romagna contrary to his wish; and, to give colour to his assertions, after he had subdued nearly all that province, he recalled him therefrom, and ordered him to attack the territory of Brescia, then in the hands of the Venetians.

The latter, though thus pressed, were at first too proud to ask the assistance of their former allies, and contented themselves with opposing to Piccinino an insignificant captain of their own, of the name of Catamelata. But one stronghold after another fell into the hands of their enemy; all the armaments that they sent up the river were defeated; the entire territory of Brescia was overrun; and the two towns of Brescia and Verona were closely blockaded, and seemed likely ere long to surrender. Their pride was then subdued by their misfortunes; they knew that nothing could save them except the aid of their former allies. They sent, not without feelings of deep mortification, and trembling

at the prospect of a refusal, to beg for assistance from the Florentines. The lately kindled resentment of the latter had been extinguished by their jealousy and dread of their old enemy the duke, and they gave a ready audience to the Venetian ambassadors, and endeavoured to procure the services of Sforza for their common cause.

The son of the peasant of Cotignola had now risen to such importance that the probable issue of the contest seemed to rest in his hands. Of this Philip was as well aware as his enemies; and, with a view to keep him from them, he promised, day after day, to allow him to conclude his marriage with his daughter, who had then attained the age of thirteen years. He had even sent him the stipulated dowry of thirty thousand florins. But the long delay disgusted and irritated Sforza; and, finding that his former generosity had profited him nothing, he determined to try if his future father-in-law could not be worked on by fear as well as by friendship. He was already acquainted with the double part he had played with Alphonso and René, and had more than a suspicion of his treacherous dealings towards himself. He therefore lent a ready ear to the Florentine and Venetian ambassadors, who represented to him that he, above all men, was interested in keeping down the power of the duke, and maintaining the independence of the Venetians; that, if they were once subdued by him, it would be difficult to resist his further encroachments; that, in that case, so far from being able to maintain him in his newly-acquired position, they could not even guarantee their own inde-

pendence; and that, so far as his future prospects were concerned, they were more likely to be advanced by the adversity than by the prosperity of Philip. On the 18th of February 1439, the allied republics signed a treaty with Sforza, in which it was agreed that he was to take the command of the forces against Philip for an annual salary of twenty-two thousand florins; that the Florentines should bear one-third and the Venetians two-thirds of the expenses of the war; and that they were to assist him in the event of an attack being made on his dominions in Umbria. He himself consented, though not without some difficulty, to pass the Po any time he should be required to do so in the course of the two following years. This league was joined by the pope, the Genoese, and several of the minor tyrants of Italy.

At the commencement of the war, Verona and Brescia were closely blockaded by the forces of the duke; and it was not generally believed that they would be able to hold out much longer. As many thought that the eventual issue of the contest depended upon the possession of these cities, and that, if they were once lost, all future attempts to curb the power of Philip would be fruitless, it was determined to make one vigorous effort for their relief, and to request Sforza forthwith to march into Lombardy. There were two difficulties in the way of this course. Though he himself had laid aside all scruples about passing the Po, the Florentines feared that, by his entering Lombardy, they would be exposed to an invasion from the duke;

for, if he were to retire into his strongholds, he might with a small number of men keep Sforza in check, and send into Tuscany a considerable army, which might be joined by the exiles, and such of their subject states as were inclined to shake off their authority. Secondly, as Sforza was now in the marquisate of Ancona, as many of the strong places in Romagna were garrisoned by Philip, and as the intervening country was in many places flooded by the overflowing of the rivers, he might find it no easy matter to effect a junction with the Venetian army in Lombardy.

Their first difficulty was overcome by the diplomacy of the Venetians. The Florentines, however, being anxious that the concession of this point should be considered as a special favour, sent an ambassador to Venice for the purpose of extolling their own generosity, and smoothing over any feelings of enmity their allies might still entertain towards their general. The ambassador, on his arrival, made a speech in the senate, which throws considerable light on the spirit of the times, and shows clearly the reputation which Sforza had already obtained. He began by stating that the power of the duke, if allowed to increase, would be the ruin of both states alike; and that, if the Venetian government had understood that as well as the Florentines, they would now have been free from the dangers with which they were menaced, and in every way in much better condition. After casting in their teeth some of their past differences, and contrasting their selfishness and inconstancy with the generosity and

perseverance which he claimed for his own country, he tried to persuade them that even then they were waging war with Philip more out of friendship for them than from the prospect of gaining or preserving anything for themselves, or from any immediate fears on their own account; that they might easily have remained on good terms with Philip while he was engaged in making himself master of Lombardy, and so have avoided all the expense and the danger of the present contest; that, even after he had annihilated the Venetians, they might make a vigorous stand for their own safety, as his increasing power would alarm and set against him all the other states of Italy; that, nevertheless, they were influenced more by the recollection of friendship for their former allies than by any such selfish considerations, and determined on making the same efforts to preserve their allies that they would to save themselves. "Wherefore," he added, "the rulers of my country, thinking it afore all things necessary to relieve Brescia and Verona, and being of opinion that this could not be effected without the Count Sforza, first of all sent me to him to urge him to enter Lombardy, and to carry on the war in every quarter of that province, (for you know that he is under no obligation to carry it north of the Po.) This I have persuaded him to do by dint of those arguments which I am now laying before you. And he, invincible as he is in arms, does not wish either to be behind any in courtesy: he is willing even to go beyond that liberality which he sees displayed in our conduct towards you; for he clearly perceives the dangers that

threaten Tuscany after his departure; but as he saw that we thought nothing of our danger in comparison with your safety, he also is willing for your sakes to put his private feelings in the back-ground. I am come, then, to offer you the service of the count, with seven thousand horse and two thousand foot, prepared to go against the enemy anywhere. I therefore join the rulers of my state in entreating you that, as the number of Sforza's men exceeds those which he is obliged to bring into the field, you also recompense him with becoming liberality, so that you may never give him cause to lament having come to your assistance, nor us of having recommended him to do so."*

To men sorely pressed by the adverse fortune of war, the messenger who comes with promises of reinforcement, and offers of the services of the best general of the day, is sure to be acceptable. The Florentine ambassador, while delivering his speech, was listened to almost like an oracle; and, at the conclusion of it, his audience became so excited that they would scarcely allow a formal reply to be given. They all rose on their feet, and, with uplifted hands, the majority of them with their faces bathed with tears, expressed their gratitude to the Florentines, both for the kindness of their intentions and their celerity in carrying them into effect; and vowed that they and their descendants, for all future generations, would ever retain the most grateful sense of their kindness.†

To conduct his army into Lombardy, Francesco

* MACHIAVELLI, *Storia*, lib. v. † *Ibid.*

Sforza selected the route by Bologna and Ferrara, as the one in which he was least likely to be delayed by the strongholds of his enemies, or by the difficulty of crossing the rivers. He effected his march without any remarkable adventure till he arrived on the banks of the Po, in the vicinity of Ferrara. Here, however, he was a second time in danger of having his army destroyed by the floods. The king of the rivers had, as in the fine simile of Tasso,* "broken from his confines as a bull from his pastures, carrying destruction over the surrounding country, and, butting against the Adriatic with his many horns, appeared to be waging war against, not paying tribute to, the sea." But as he had been formerly rescued from a danger of a like nature by the gallantry of a princess, so, if we may credit his biographer,† he was on the present occasion saved by what might appear to many an interposition of Providence. An immense number of snakes, having surrounded the tents of the general and many of his soldiers, awoke them from their slumbers, and, ere it was too late, made them aware of their danger. On this they managed, without any loss, to effect their march to the Fossæ Claudianæ, where they found the boats of the Venetians awaiting them, and were conveyed in safety to the northern bank.

His arrival was to the Venetians what the first glimpse of sunshine is to mariners in a storm. The

* "Sovra i rotti confini abra la fronte
Di tauro e vincitor d' intorno inonda
E con più corna Adria rispinge, e pare
Che guerra porti, e non tributo al mare."
Ger. Lib. ix. 46.

† Simoneta, lib. v.

new general caused a change both in their prospects and plans.* Though but recently trembling for their very existence as an independent state, they now began to speculate on further acquisitions of territory. The first object of Sforza was to relieve Verona—Piccinino's wish was to starve it into a surrender before he could arrive there with his forces. He was unwilling to risk a general action to obstruct the advance of his adversary; but, true to the tactics he had learned in the school of Braccio, he endeavoured to delay him by throwing a small force into every stronghold, and contesting every position on the way. For this purpose he left a garrison in the city of Leonico, and took up a strong position near Soave, a town between the territories of Vicenza and Verona, which appeared to command the only entrance into the latter, between the mountains and the marshes on the northern bank of the Adige. But Sforza was not to be diverted from the main object of his enterprise by such obstacles as these; he had learned his tactics in the camp of the great opponent of Braccio, and he determined to push on to Verona, by a manœuvre similar to that by which his father had endeavoured to bring his army to Aquila on the day of his death. The only manner in which he could effect this was by a mountain route to the north of Soave, hitherto deemed impassable. Notwithstanding its difficulties, he succeeded in penetrating into the open country between that place and Verona. Pic-

* "Omnia repente mutaverat imperator mutatus; alia spes, alius animus hominum, fortuna quoque urbis alia videri."—TIT. LIV. v. 19.

cinino, finding his position turned and his forces divided, raised the blockade in the greatest haste, and, after an indecisive engagement near Soave, retired to the south of the Adige, leaving his adversary in undisputed possession of Verona, and the whole line of communication between that city and Venice.

Sforza, having thus completely succeeded in relieving Verona, turned his attention to Brescia, which was still blockaded by the enemy. The latter place is separated from the former by the water, whose course has been so beautifully described by Dante.* At the foot of the Alps it assumes the form of a lake, which, in the time of the poet, was called Benaco, but now takes its name from the town of Garda, on the eastern bank. This lake is so situated on the confines of the territories of Verona, Brescia, and Trent in the Tyrol, that it was said that there was a point in the

* "Suso in Italia bella giace un laco
Appiè dell' Alpe che serra Lamagna
Sovra Tiralli ed ha nome Benaco.

. . . . .

Luogo è nel mezzo là dove 'l Trentino
Pastore e quel di Brescia e 'l Veronese
Segnar poria se fesse quel cammino :
Siede Peschiera, bello e forte arnese
Da fronteggiar Bresciani e Bergamaschi,
Ove la riva intorno più discese.
Ivi convien che tutto quanto caschi
Ciò che 'n grembo a Benaco star non può,
E fassi fiume giù pe' verdi paschi.
Tosto che l' acqua a correr mette co,
Non più Benaco, ma Mincio si chiama
Fino a Governo dove cade in Po.
Non molto ha corso che trova una lama
Nella qual si distende e la 'mpaluda,
E suol di state talora esser grama."

Inf. c. xx.

centre of it equally within the jurisdiction of the bishops of each of those places. From its southern extremity issues the Mincio, which, after passing through green meadows, and occasionally assuming a marsh-like form, flows into the Po. At the point where it leaves the lake is Peschiera, a beautiful and strong fortress on the road between Verona and Brescia; a little to the west of the lake lies the town of Brescia itself. For some time it had received supplies of provisions from the Venetian fleet which plied on the lake; but the enemy having managed to get possession of the whole of the intervening territory, the fleet could do nothing for its relief, and they seemed destined to be passive spectators of the distress and fall of their allies. They now, however, determined to convey Sforza's army across the lake; and Sforza himself laid siege to the fortress of Bandolino, from which, if it were once in his hands, he might easily embark. But fortune was at first unfavourable to him—a fever, brought on partly by excessive heat, and partly by insufficient and insalubrious diet, broke out in his camp; a great part of his force was rendered incapable of acting, and he deemed it prudent to retire to Zevio, a fortress in the territory of Verona, for the purpose of recruiting his own health and that of his soldiers. This unforeseen accident gave Piccinino an opportunity of hazarding a blow to redeem his lost honour. The Milanese had a considerable number of vessels in different ports on the lake, which he manned with the flower of his infantry, and then attacked and almost annihilated the fleet of the Vene-

tians. By this means he acquired possession of nearly all the strongholds on the lake, and deprived the Brescians of all hopes of receiving supplies by water. But Sforza was resolved to make a vigorous effort for the relief of the place; and as the destruction of the Venetian fleet had deprived him of all hopes of crossing the lake, and as his march along its southern bank would be considerably retarded by the beautiful and strong fortress of Peschiera, and others that were garrisoned by the enemy, he determined, as before, to turn his adversary by a mountain route to the north of the lake; and having proceeded by the Val d' Acri, and the small lake of St Andrea, he brought his army in safety to its north-western bank. After this he set about the reduction of Tenna, a fortress to the north of Brescia.

The undisputed possession of the lake gave Piccinino a great advantage in being able to collect his forces against his adversary on whatever side he happened to be. The latter had scarcely invested Tenna before he was attacked by a considerable army brought across the lake from Peschiera. The battle was obstinately contested, but ended in a complete victory being gained by the Venetians; a considerable number of prisoners fell into their hands, though some managed to effect their escape by the same ships that brought them from Peschiera. Piccinino himself narrowly escaped being taken by a ludicrous device. Being compelled to retire into Tenna, which was soon surrounded by the victors, his capture seemed inevitable. He was, however, at-

tended by a German soldier who was much attached to him personally, and who now put his illustrious master into a sack, and carried him in this position through the ranks of his enemies, being himself disguised as an agricultural peasant!

Machiavelli remarks of this victory, that, if it had been properly followed up, it might have effected the relief of Brescia, and completed the triumph of the Venetians. But nobody knew better than this acute politician that the vigorously following up any advantage, so as to bring the war to a successful termination, formed no part of the practice of those who were employed to lead the armies of others, and paid during the continuation of hostilities. These mercenary generals might wish to gain a triumph over their enemy in order to enhance their own reputation, or to gratify their private animosity; they were anxious to avoid defeat, as entailing loss upon themselves; they eagerly hailed every opportunity of encouraging their soldiers with booty; but they seldom bestowed much pains in obtaining the object most desired by the belligerent parties. In the present instance, the command of the lake afforded Piccinino great facility in bringing together and rallying his discomfited forces out of reach of the victors; and Sforza, having already made the duke of Milan sensible of his power, might have been unwilling to press him too severely. Accordingly, ere the latter had reaped any of the advantage of his victory, the former had reorganised an army in the vicinity of Peschiera. And it was not long before he had an opportunity

of redeeming his own honour, and bringing back his enemy from the scene of his triumph.

The city of Verona is situated at the foot of a low ridge of the mountains, just where the Adige issues from the Alps, "impetuously descends into Italy, and cleaves in two, like the Meander, that delightful land, that is above all others delightful." * It is divided into two parts by the river, the upper and smaller portion of which is built on mountainous ground, and contains two fortresses of great strength, San Piero and San Felice, which command the whole of the city: the lower portion is situated entirely on level ground, and surrounded by walls of great strength, in which are likewise two fortresses, called the old and the new, distant about a mile from one another, and joined together by another wall, which forms a sort of cord to the exterior one of the city. As the whole of the territory beneath was open to an invasion from the marquis of Mantua, who at that time was in alliance with the duke, Francesco Sforza, on marching forward thence, had given the strictest directions about these two fortresses being vigilantly guarded; but the removal of the scene of operations to the west of the lake, and the reputation and triumphs of Sforza, had produced so great a feeling of security that these precautions were neglected. Piccinino being well aware of the defenceless state of the

* "Rapido fiume che d' Alpestra vena
Impetuosamente a noi discende
E quella terra sovra ogn' altra amena
Per mezzo a guisa di Meandro fendi."

Berni.

city, and knowing well that no enterprises are so frequently crowned with success as those which are deemed impossible by the enemy, determined to make an attempt upon the lower quarter. Accordingly, on the evening of the 5th of November 1439, he went thither along with the marquis of Mantua and a select body of soldiers, and succeeded in the course of the long night in making himself master of the New citadel. The men who had thus acquired an entry into the city opened the adjoining gate of San Antonio, and made way for the cavalry to charge through the streets.

The winged soldiers of Alexander did not strike more surprise into the occupants of the fortress of Petra Oxiani than did the appearance of the Milanese troops into the inhabitants of the lower quarter of Verona. A small party of Venetian soldiers descended from the old fortress and attempted to summon them to arms; but though the majority preferred being the subjects of the republic of Saint Mark to being ruled by the dukes of Milan, they could not risk their lives and their properties every time they were exposed to the attack of one of her enemies. Accordingly, ere the depredations of the soldiers had extended beyond the wall which joined the two fortresses, they came to terms with their conquerors. The garrison of the Venetians, along with the inhabitants that were most attached to their cause, succeeded in making their escape to the upper quarter of the city, where they ensconced themselves safely in the fortress of San Felice. In the mean time, Piccinino and the marquis of Mantua, feeling assured that ere

long they would be attacked, turned every moment to account in getting possession of all the most commanding positions, and cutting off by means of barricades all communication between the town and those fortresses that still remained in the hands of the enemy.

Tidings of the capture of Verona were soon brought to Sforza; but he, like many greater generals than himself, was for a long time unwilling to believe that his enemy had made a movement for which he was so little prepared. It required several successive messengers to convince him of their truth.* Whatever might have been his real views as to the inflicting further losses on the duke, he was determined to give up none of the advantages that he had gained. His present position seemed fraught with danger,—the enemy were in possession of all the country south of the lake,—winter was already setting in, and threatening to render impassable the roads to the north. Piccinino, having rallied the spirits of his troops by his recent success, might bring a considerable force from Brescia and other places to act against him, and so possibly surround him or cut off his supplies. For these reasons he was urged by his colleagues to retire without loss of time to Vicenza. But he remained inflexible in his determination to make

* As an instance of the incredulity of some great men on similar occasions, it may be mentioned that Marshal Soult was for a long time incredulous when it was reported to him that the British troops were passing the Douro, on the occasion of the capture of Oporto in 1809. During the retreat of the British from Burgos in 1812, the Duke of Wellington would not at first believe that the enemy were crossing the Tormes; and in the memorable 18th June 1815, it was a long time before Buonaparte was persuaded that the force which was advancing on his right was not part of his own army.

an effort to recover Verona. However, the report that he adopted the former alternative had spread among his enemies, and was so generally credited, that when Piccinino, on the 9th day of November, beheld his army among the mountains to the north, he believed him to be on his route to his winter-quarters in that place. He was then struck with no small consternation when he saw him turn to the south and march straight in the direction of the town.

During the four days that the Milanese soldiers had been in possession of the town, they had made but little progress with their work; regardless alike of the wishes of their general, and of the express stipulation of the treaty, they had been intent on enriching themselves. Thus the fortress of San Felice still remained in the hands of the Venetians; its communications with the rest of the city were uninterrupted; the other strongholds in the upper quarter were scarcely occupied; and it was found impossible to bring together a sufficient number of troops to make any effectual opposition to the entrance of Sforza into the castle of San Felice. The latter, having established himself there, gained an easy victory over the Milanese in the upper quarter. He took a great number of them prisoners, and might possibly have almost annihilated the whole of the army, if one of the bridges had not broken down, after they had effected their retreat to the south of the Adige. The following day, Sforza having entered this part of the city by another bridge adjoining the castle Vecchio, the Milanese evacuated the city, and

fled across the open country to Mantua. Thus within the short space of four days was Verona taken and lost by the troops of Piccinino.

After this the victors returned to Tenna, to follow up their operations for the relief of Brescia. But the winter was now too far advanced for Italian mercenaries to continue fighting the battles of their employers in the Alps; and Sforza, having managed, not without some difficulty, to send a supply of provisions to the besieged, placed his army in cantonments in the neighbourhood of Vicenza and Verona. In the latter place he endeavoured to have all the booty which had been taken by the soldiers of Piccinino, and had fallen into the hands of his men, returned to their rightful owners. To mark their sense of his generosity, the citizens presented him with two thousand ducats, which he distributed among his soldiers in recompense for the booty to which, according to the rules of war, they might have considered themselves entitled. The Venetians were actively engaged during the winter in reorganising a fleet on the waters of Lake Garda.

CHAPTER VI.

FORCE ORGANISED TO INVADE TUSCANY.—DELIBERATIONS AT VENICE.—RECOMMENCEMENT OF ACTIVE OPERATIONS.—SFORZA RELIEVES BRESCIA—DEFEATS THE MILANESE GENERALS — EXTENDS HIS CONQUESTS. — NICOLO PICCININO RAVAGES THE COUNTRY NEAR FLORENCE — RETIRES TO PERUGIA—IS DEFEATED AT ANGHIARI.—FILIPPO MARIA EMPLOYS THE MARQUIS OF FERRARA TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS WITH SFORZA.—CAUTION DISPLAYED BY SFORZA. — PICCININO ARRIVES IN LOMBARDY — RECOVERS MUCH OF THE TERRITORY THAT HAD BEEN TAKEN BY SFORZA. — MANŒUVRES AND COUNTER-MANŒUVRES OF PICCININO AND SFORZA. — SFORZA BLOCKADED AT MARTINENGO. — NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE DUKE OF MILAN AND SFORZA—DISAPPOINTMENT OF PICCININO—SUSPICIONS OF THE VENETIANS QUIETED BY SFORZA. — MARRIAGE OF SFORZA WITH BIANCA MARIA.—PEACE.

THE events of the past year having convinced Filippo Maria that, while Sforza remained in Lombardy, all further attempt to extend his conquests would be fruitless, he wisely determined to make a diversion to free himself of that general, who seemed destined through life to be his scourge. The Florentines who had been banished by Cosmo de' Medici still continued to exhort him to an invasion of Tuscany; and whatever other merits this plan might possess, it now appeared to him the readiest method of freeing Lombardy from Sforza. Being well aware of the personal friendship which that general entertained towards Cosmo de' Medici and the Florentines, and of the ill-concealed jealousy that still existed between him and the Venetians, he thought,

naturally enough, that he would be more solicitous about the safety of the former than the aggrandisement of the latter. Moreover, it seemed to him that, if the seat of war could by any means be transferred to the vicinity of his own dominions, he would not long remain at a distance from home, fighting the battles of others. For these reasons, in the month of February 1440, he sent Piccinino to Tuscany and Romagna with six thousand horse. In the following month that general arrived at Bologna, accompanied by a considerable number of Florentine exiles. Philip also endeavoured to raise a new enemy against Florence, in the person of Vitellius, the late patriarch of Alessandria. That prelate had on a former occasion received from the pope the temporary appointment of Regent of Naples. Shortly after he had resigned this office he attained the dignity of cardinal, and continued to impress the pope with such an idea of his talent that, in the absence of Sforza, he was appointed to the command of his armies. The phantom of regal power, shortlived as it was, seems to have awakened in him an inextinguishable ambition: he was no longer content to remain in a subordinate situation; and while he affected to be in the confidence, he in reality acted quite independently of his master. Being ill-disposed towards the ruling party in Florence, and jealous of Sforza, he lent a ready ear to the suggestions of Philip, to lead the forces of Eugenius to co-operate with Nicolo Piccinino in an invasion of Tuscany. The latter had already compelled Malatesta of Rimini, and several of the condottieri of Romagna, to join his standard, so that

a formidable force seemed likely to be brought together against the Florentine republic.

Such was the state of affairs when Sforza and the Florentine ambassadors repaired to Venice to deliberate on the plan of the ensuing campaign. Both of the allied republics were, as usual, equally anxious to obtain the services of the first general of the day for the object most important to themselves: the Venetians were of course desirous that he should follow up his successes in Lombardy; the Florentines wished that he should repel Nicolo Piccinino from their own frontiers. The old arguments on each side were used: each endeavoured to show that the independence of their own state was most necessary to cripple the power of the duke, and that its subjugation would be fraught with the greatest danger to the liberties of Italy; in addition to which, it was urged with great force by the Florentines, that it could not be expected that they should allow their very existence to be perilled for the sake of enabling the Venetians to extend their dominions in Lombardy, by which they themselves would gain nothing. For his part, Sforza seemed anxious to bring his forces to a spot where he might most easily watch any attack made upon his own dominions. But the argument which really weighed most in their deliberations, and which ultimately prevailed with both the Florentines and Sforza, was this, that the real object which Philip had in view, in sending Piccinino to Tuscany, was to procure the recall of Sforza from Lombardy; that by sending him to Tuscany they would be only playing the game

of their enemy, and that the Florentines could not adopt any surer method of freeing their frontiers from an enemy, than by carrying on the war close to Milan.

Persuaded in part by these arguments, and in part by the promise of eight thousand ducats from the Venetians, Sforza, with the permission of the Florentines, consented to remain in Lombardy. It was some time, however, before he would resume active operations for the relief of Brescia ; when urged to do so, he pointed out the impossibility of effecting his object from the south, or of carrying on war during the severe weather of the early spring in the mountainous regions to the north. Whatever force there might have been in these arguments, it is more than probable that he was reluctant to lead his troops from a spot whence he might, on the first emergency, conduct them to the defence of his own territory in Ancona. Indeed, the Venetians had frequently the utmost difficulty in preventing him from doing so. Intelligence, however, soon arrived which made the affairs of the Florentines wear a brighter aspect than heretofore, and freed him from all immediate apprehensions as to his own principality.

Eugenius IV., however jealous he might be of Sforza, had always been friendly disposed towards the Florentines and Venetians. The intrigues of Vitellius with Nicolo Piccinino, carried on as they were without his knowledge, were in direct opposition to the party whom he had always sought to maintain. Part of their correspondence was intercepted by the spies whom the

Florentines had posted on their frontiers, and immediately despatched to him. The general purport of the letter, though written in cipher, was understood by the pontiff; and in addition to the proof furnished therein of Vitellius treating with Piccinino without the consent of his master, it might possibly have contained some allusion to a conspiracy for assassinating the pope and placing himself on the pontifical chair, in which he was suspected to have been engaged. Be this as it may, Eugenius determined that he should no longer have an opportunity of injuring him, and gave secret orders to Antonio da Redi, the commander of the guard at St Angelo, to arrest him. This, though a matter of some difficulty, was effected one morning by drawing up the bridge of the fortress immediately after he had passed it on horseback. After this he was thrown into prison, and in less than a month put to death. The pope then intrusted the command of his armies to Louis the patriarch of Aquila, and promised to assist the Florentines with four thousand horse and two thousand foot. This occurrence alone effected a considerable change in the prospects of the Florentines: in addition to which, Sforza received intelligence that Malatesta had joined Nicolo Piccinino entirely out of fear, and was ready to desert him at the earliest opportunity. Thus he now had little reason to be solicitous either on account of his allies or of his own kingdom of Ancona; and after having despatched Neri Capponi with one thousand men to the assistance of the former, he consented to resume his offensive operations in Lombardy.

The experience of the campaign of 1439 having shown him how important the command of the lake of Garda was for the successful carrying on of operations in the disputed territory around, he determined to commence his campaign by striking a blow for that purpose. He therefore directed the fleet, which the Venetians had equipped in obedience to his orders, to be brought on its waters. On the 18th April 1440 they attacked the Milanese ships, and gained a complete victory. Almost all the strongholds in the vicinity of the lake having, in consequence, fallen into his hands, he made a simultaneous advance upon Brescia from the north and the south. One or two ineffectual attempts were made to stop his progress on the north; on the south his troops were allowed to pass the Mincio without any opposition from the marquis of Mantua, who had been stationed at Peschiera. The Milanese generals, Taliano and Ludovico del Verme, who had invested Brescia, being thus threatened on all sides, evacuated the surrounding territory; and on the 10th June that town was at length freed from the blockade which, during the three years that it lasted, had often reduced it to the utmost extremity. But Sforza was not now content with this single triumph: he was resolved that Philip should for once experience what he could do, and followed up his success with a vigour worthy of the greatest masters of war. Without halting at Brescia, or even entering the city, he immediately went in pursuit of the Milanese generals. He found them occupying a position near Soncino, commanding a

bridge over the Oglio, a river separating the territory of Bergamos from that of Brescia. To obtain possession of this place, which might be reckoned the key of the former territory, he ordered one of his generals to make a false attack upon the bridge, and to lure his enemies to his side by a semblance of retreat. The artifice succeeded according to his most sanguine expectations: the Milanese, thinking that they had gained a victory, pursued their enemies with great precipitancy across the bridge, and arrived in considerable numbers and some disorder on the other side. When their army was sufficiently divided, Sforza fell upon them with an unbroken force, and having routed or captured the majority, he again led his men across the bridge, of which he retained possession till his whole forces had arrived on the western bank of the river. The Milanese army, already broken and discouraged, fled in great confusion; one of their generals was taken, the other only escaped capture by throwing himself off his horse and remaining concealed in the mud; all their baggage and camp-equipage fell into the hands of the conquerors.

This important victory put Sforza in possession of nearly all the castles in the territory of Bergamos. Before the end of June he succeeded in taking Caravaggio, almost the only place in the country that offered him any resistance; and in the following month he continued ravaging the territories of the Gheradda, Cremona, and Mantua. In the words of Muratori, when the autumnal rains set in, his soldiers took up their quarters in the adjoining territories, flushed with victory

and laden with booty; and Filippo Maria had ample cause to rue his having abandoned and deceived the man who, if he had chosen to make use of him, would have been as his right arm.

While these events were going on in Lombardy, Nicolo Piccinino had been engaged in conducting his expedition against Florence. After a vain attempt to enter Tuscany by the pass of San Benedict, he was allowed to cross the mountains by the passes of Marrodi and San Lorenzo, in consequence of the treachery of one to whom the defence of the fortress adjoining the former place had been intrusted; and having entered the rich vale beneath, he ravaged all the country up to the mountains of Fiesole. He then crossed the Arno, and extended his depredations to within three miles of Florence. He hoped that the injuries he was inflicting upon the inhabitants would render them discontented with the government, and lead them to communicate with the exiles who were then in his camp. But the Florentine people, however contentious among themselves, were always united against an enemy; and on the present occasion, acting with a firmness equal to that of the Romans when Hannibal occupied the Forum, they determined to submit to their losses till the arrival of the promised reinforcements should enable them to repel the invaders. Their heroic conduct was in no small degree owing to the popularity of Cosmo de' Medici, and the firmness of the chief magistrates. It was not long before their hopes were revived by the arrival of Neri Capponi with a thousand of Sforza's

best soldiers from Lombardy. Neri, though not strong enough to risk a general engagement, was enabled, by retaking some of the fortresses in the neighbourhood, to restrain the depredations of Piccinino. The latter, finding that he made no impression on the citizens, determined to retire, partly under the expectation that the enemy would follow him, and give him an opportunity of attacking to advantage. Having quitted the vicinity of the city, he directed his march along the valley of the Arno, and engaged himself in the capture of the fortresses situated on the heights between it and the valley of the Tiber. But the Florentines, perceiving that their true policy was to throw every delay in the way of their adversary, till they could join their own forces with those of Eugenius, or until the successes of Sforza should compel Philip to recall him, made no attempt to pursue, but encouraged the garrisons of all the fortresses to hold out to the last. At length Piccinino, perceiving that he was wasting much valuable time to very little purpose, and weary of remaining in a country where, according to his own expression, his horses had nothing but rocks to feed on, determined on trying his fortune in his native city of Perugia. The inhabitants of that place received him with all the civility due to an illustrious countryman, and presented him with eight thousand ducats, but gave no encouragement to his favourite project of re-establishing the kingdom of Braccio. He then made an ineffectual attempt to get possession of Cortona; but here also, in the words of Muratori, all his designs ended in vapour.

Time, which tries all things, now showed the wisdom of the measures adopted by the Florentines. While Piccinino was wasting the season in an almost fruitless campaign in the Apennines, they had joined all their own forces with those of the pope, and taken up a position at Anghiari, at the foot of the mountain, to the north-west of the valley of the Tiber. Moreover, as Philip, being reduced to the last extremity of distress by Sforza, had, in accordance with their anticipation, sent to recall Piccinino in all haste, they now began to anticipate a bloodless termination to the campaign, which at first had seemed fraught with danger to their very existence. But the latter, anxious to redeem his want of success by some brilliant feat, determined, before leaving Tuscany, on risking a general action, in which he felt almost confident of success. The situation of the combined forces at that moment gave him every advantage; for the Florentines, not desiring to retain a hostile army in their territory, had sent word that no attempt should be made to intercept his retreat; while their generals, being aware that the orders of the duke were most urgent, had no expectation of being attacked. In consequence of this ill-timed security, their soldiers were scattered through the country while Piccinino was bearing down upon them with the whole of his force. The number of the troops on each side, if they had all been concentrated together, must have been nearly equal: the army of six thousand, which Piccinino had originally brought with him from Lombardy, had been augmented by the force of Malatesta, the

Count Poppi, and a considerable number of Florentine exiles; on the other side were the troops of Eugenius, amounting to six thousand men, which, together with the thousand that Neri had brought from the army of Sforza, and those commanded by Michael Attendolo and Piero Giam Paolo, must have formed a force not inferior to the former; but, from the dispersed and unprepared state of the latter, Piccinino anticipated an easy victory. He was already within two miles of the enemy, when Michael Attendolo, perceiving a great cloud of dust in the distance, gave orders to take up arms. Fortunately, the nature of the ground was such as permitted him to make a stand while his troops were being collected together. In front of their position was a branch of the Upper Tiber, passable only by a bridge, the road to which, on each side, was fenced off by ditches of sufficient magnitude to present a formidable obstacle to the passage of the heavy-armed troops of the day. The Florentine generals lost no time in having the ditches on their side of the river filled up, so that they might bring a large number of men simultaneously to the approach of the bridge, to which Piccinino could conduct his troops on the other side only by the high-road. By availing themselves of this advantage, they were able to prevent the enemy crossing the river till they had collected their forces in the rear. When at length they were driven across the bridge, and forced to retire to the mountains of Anghiari, they were able to give battle with tolerably equal numbers. The engagement lasted for several hours, in the course of which the bridge was

often taken and retaken, the Florentines each time having a considerable advantage from being able to bring all their forces to bear against the enemy whenever they attempted to pass to their side, while they could only be opposed by the troops on the road. At length fortune declared in their favour; the Milanese troops were driven back in considerable confusion, and, being hemmed in by ditches on each side, were unable to rally: a great number were taken prisoners on the spot—many lost their horses in attempting to effect their escape into the surrounding country. Of the whole army of Nicolo, which could not have been less than eight thousand, only one thousand horsemen arrived in safety at Borgo San Sepolcro.

This battle affords an admirable specimen of the mode in which wars were carried on by the mercenary troops of that period. If we may credit Machiavelli, though it lasted four hours, only one man lost his life; and even he was not killed by the hand of an enemy, but expired from having been trodden on and ridden over after a fall from his horse: and though this circumstance is not mentioned by other historians of the time, and its literal truth is discredited by M. Sismondi and other modern writers, it may nevertheless be inferred therefrom that the soldiers did not display much zeal in risking their lives for those whose pay they were receiving. Nor did the conquerors turn it to any good account for their employers. The Florentine commissioners were particularly anxious to follow it up by marching to Borgo San Sepolcro, and there besieging

the defeated generals; but both the condottieri and the common soldiers, declaring that they must collect together their booty and look to their wounds, refused to obey them. The day following the battle, without even asking permission, they went to Arezzo for the purpose of depositing their spoil, and then returned to Anghiari; and though the commissioners were particularly anxious to cripple the future operations of the duke of Milan and his generals, by retaining all their prisoners, the soldiers let them go as soon as they got out of them all that they had to give. Thus the Florentines were in no better position than if they had never gained their victory, as Piccinino had even then received orders from Philip to evacuate Tuscany; and that general was able to effect his retreat to Romagna, and afterwards enter Lombardy, with a force but little diminished by his disaster. The real sufferers in each case were the unfortunate subjects, from whom was to be wrung the tribute sufficient to pay the price of the victory, or to repair the damage of a defeat.

When Piccinino arrived in Lombardy, the whole of the territory between Verona and the Adda, with the exception of Mantua and Cremona, had fallen into the hands of the Venetians. Sforza was anxious to reduce the last-named places before prosecuting his conquests west of the Adda, and making an attempt on the city of Milan. The Venetians had promised to him the sovereignty of the former of these principalities should he succeed in reducing it—on condition, however, that he should resign it for that of Cremona, if both places

should fall into his hands; and that he was to give up both of them, should he ever become possessed of Milan. While he had been engaged in the territory of Gheradda, Gonzaga had garrisoned Peschiera, which he considered the key of his own dominions; but when this place had been retaken after a bombardment of eight days by Sforza, the fate of Mantua seemed no longer doubtful. These continued successes of Sforza still further frightened the duke: he well knew that, though Piccinino might retard his progress, he had not in general shown himself a match for him, and it now seemed advisable to combat him with other weapons besides those of war. Philip, perfectly understanding the man with whom he had to deal, sent his daughter to Ferrara, and spread about a report that he had destined her hand and the reversion of his duchy to Lionel, the son of the marquis of Ferrara; but in the mean time he authorised Nicholas, the father of Lionel, to reopen negotiations with Sforza about the long-promised marriage. By so doing he hoped, even if he failed in detaching the latter from his present engagements, to arouse the suspicions of the Venetians, and so make them lukewarm in support of their general, or possibly to subject him to the fate of Carmagnola.

The marquis, much as he might have desired the heiress of Milan for his own son, undertook the commission. He requested Francesco to meet him at Marmidolo, a villa that he possessed in the territory of Mantua, to treat of matrimony and peace. This, however,

Sforza refused to do without the consent of the senate of Venice. But Nicholas well knew that, however coy he might be about opening the negotiations on such a delicate subject, he would not be in reality averse to them, and accordingly he proceeded himself to his camp at Peschiera. Having been received there with all due honour by his ancient friend and client, he proceeded to paint in the most glowing colours the advantages of the course he proposed. He represented to him that, as his own career had been one of uninterrupted success, and that as he had reconquered all, and more than all, that the Venetians had any claim to, he had done everything that was necessary to maintain his own glory as a general, or that could in justice be required by his employers, and that he might now, without any breach of honour, retire to the south of the Po; that Philip, he knew, was desirous of peace, and was willing to concede all that could equitably be demanded by the Florentines or the Venetians; and that, if he were agreeable, he would give him his daughter without further delay. He backed all these representations by reminding Sforza of a circumstance of which nobody was better aware than himself, and which had evidently weighed with him in his former dealings, viz., that no man could be more interested in preserving the integrity of the Milanese dominions than one most likely to succeed to them.

However reasonable these arguments, and however tempting the accompanying offers might have appeared to Sforza, he had so often been deceived by Philip that

he could put no faith in his promises; so, having replied to the marquis that he would lay his proposals before the Venetians, he continued his operations. Having taken several places on the confines of the territories of Verona and Mantua, he took up his winter-quarters in the former. The Venetians, in addition to the conquests that he had made for them, received a further accession of territory in the town of Ravenna, the inhabitants of which had revolted to them.

In the mean time the duke, having failed in his negotiations with Sforza, endeavoured to retrieve his affairs by means of Piccinino. That general, though no match for Sforza in a general engagement, had not the same scruple as Alexander about stealing a victory; so, after having spent some time in levying contributions from the subjects and allies of Philip, and reorganising his forces, he marched upon the Brescian territory in the middle of winter. The troops that had been left there by Sforza, being taken by surprise, fled into the neighbouring castles. In a short time the majority of them, amounting to two thousand horse, either through fear or through treachery, surrendered themselves to Piccinino. Having thus weakened the effective force of his adversary, Piccinino availed himself of the opportunity to recover much of what had been lost during his absence, and in a very short space of time made himself master of all the territory to the west of the lake of Garda, besides the strongholds in the territory of Mantua that had fallen into the hands of the Venetians.

News of these events being brought to Venice when Sforza was there arranging a plan of operations for the approaching season, he immediately repaired to the headquarters of his army at Verona. The Venetians also were naturally anxious to recover their lost ground; but either because they dissented among themselves, or because Philip had succeeded in making them jealous of Sforza, they did not put their general in the way of commencing operations till the middle of June. He, too, did not show the same vigour and prudence in the conduct of this campaign that he had done in the preceding one. His first step was to march into the territory of Brescia, and take up a position within five miles of Piccinino. Following his usual tactics, he determined on attacking his enemy at once, and addressed his soldiers in a speech full of boastful anticipations of success. His wary adversary, however, did not choose to be brought to a general engagement, and defended his position by continually skirmishing in front of his camp. By this means the victory which Sforza promised his soldiers was converted into a disastrous repulse. After he had drawn off his troops, he discovered a vulnerable point in the position of the enemy, which had been strangely overlooked by one of his generals during the course of the engagement, and determined on attacking in that direction on the following day. But Piccinino anticipated his plans, and, content with the damage he had done him already, retired in the course of the night.

The tactics followed by both parties during the rest of the campaign are admirably described by the annalist of Italy, who also divined their true cause. After this, says he, "they went making evolutions, and as it were playing at tournaments, without displaying any wish to try their fortune." The real reason was, that negotiations for peace were being carried on in secret, and Sforza, who with a great sense of honour communicated to the Venetian commissioners all the propositions that were made to him, was the principal person in conducting them. He, of course, was enticed by the prospect of immediately obtaining the hand of Bianca Maria; and Philip, being much annoyed by the insolence of the condottieri then in his service, who were already speculating on apportioning among themselves his dominions, in the same manner as their predecessors had divided those of Galeazzo Visconte, was more willing than heretofore to accede to the fulfilment of his wishes. The fact that letters to this effect were passing, during the whole of this campaign, between Philip and Sforza, will serve to throw light upon much of the conduct of the latter, which would otherwise be difficult of explanation.*

After the retreat of Piccinino almost all the strongholds in the vicinity of Brescia came again into the

* Neither Simoneta nor Corio make any allusion to letters passing between Philip and Sforza till the latter was blockaded at Martinengo. I have, however, related the occurrences as above on the authority of Muratori, who doubtless had consulted all the best authorities on the subject. On any other supposition, the conduct of Sforza during the campaign, and the facility with which he justified himself to the Venetians, seem inexplicable.

hands of the Venetians. The next step for their general to take was naturally to pass the river Oglio, into the territory of Bergamos; but he did not set about this in the dashing manner by which, in the preceding year, he had gained so much reputation. After a considerable delay, he made a vain attempt to pass the bridge near Soncino; but finding it strongly guarded, he did not try to carry it by force. He then turned his army towards the south, to the bridge of Pontoglio, on the high-road between Bergamos and Cremona. This bridge was commanded by a fortress, of which he possessed himself by stratagem, and so crossed the river before Piccinino was aware of his designs. He then halted for a couple of days, while Piccinino, having left a sufficient force to blockade Bergamos, took up a position to defend the territory of Gheradda. Sforza, acting as if he had the relief of the former of these places in view, began the siege of the castle of Martinengo, which commanded one of the principal approaches. Whatever might have been his real object in setting about it, it was admirably fitted to consume a great deal of time to little purpose. Before commencing operations, he deemed it necessary to fortify his camp, a work which it took thirty days to complete. He then began the siege of the fortress. But Piccinino had garrisoned the place with twelve hundred men, commanded by two of his most skilful generals, and had it amply provided with all the materials of defence. The besieged were thus enabled during the night to repair all the destruction of the fortifications made by the besiegers during the

day. The strength of these fortifications and the valour of the defendants were such that the assailants were always driven back with loss. Ere long, other dangers of a formidable nature began to environ Sforza. The army encamped before Martinengo amounted to thirty thousand men, and required the range of a considerable extent of country to supply them with provisions. Piccinino, encamped in an impregnable situation within two miles of his rear, ravaged all the surrounding country, and managed to cut off the foraging parties that were sent to a distance. The situation of Sforza, deprived of his supplies, and hemmed in by the fortress on one side, and the army of his enemy on the other, seemed critical in the extreme; the famine was already felt in his camp; to all appearance nothing awaited him but an ignominious surrender of one of the largest armies he had ever commanded, or an almost hopeless attack upon his enemy.

Piccinino now anticipated a triumph sufficient to avenge himself on his adversary for many defeats, and to entitle him to ask any favour from his employer. He had already informed the latter of the situation of the enemy, and became more insolent in his demands than before. But he little knew the extent of the negotiations that had been carried on between Philip and Sforza. The intelligence which he now sent to the former, and the insolence with which he persevered in his demands, only served to bring matters to a crisis. Philip, seeing that he had now got all he could out of Piccinino, deemed it a proper time for getting quit of

him, and making an advantageous peace with Sforza and the Venetians. For this purpose he despatched Antonio Guidobono to the camp of the enemy. On the night of the 10th of August, while Piccinino was possibly enjoying the "fairest boding dreams," he arrived at his destination, and delivered to Sforza a message to the following effect,—"Philip, who has sent me hither, knows well that one so clever and clear-sighted as you must be fully aware of the difficulties in which your affairs, as well as those of the Florentines and Venetians, are involved, inasmuch as, on account of the want of food for your men, and of forage for your horses, you are unable to continue the siege of Martinengo; and, as from the situation of your army you cannot depart hence without the most imminent danger, he feels confidently assured of victory. Nevertheless he himself is angry that, as master, he should be expected to accede to the demands of his servants, as if he were in their power." He here mentioned in detail the unreasonable demands of his different condottieri, which have been already referred to, and proceeded to say—"He does not see what severer conditions his enemies, should they come off victorious, could impose upon him than those which these men, in the midst of his prosperity, are trying to extort from him. Having due regard for your honour and advantage, as also for the welldoing of the Florentines and Venetians, he wishes to put an end to this war. He therefore appoints you the umpire of peace between him and your friends, and puts at your disposal all the conquests that Nicholas

has made in the territory of Bergamos, beginning with Martinengo. Moreover, he now gives to you your affianced wife, Bianca Maria, and requests you to accept as her dowry the city of Cremona, along with the adjoining territory on this side of the Po, (with the exception of the city of Pizzighettone, which commands the road to Lodi and Castiglio, which he has promised to Taliano, instead of which you shall have Pontremoli.) If you are willing to agree to these preliminaries, he will send another ambassador to lay the matter before you and your allies in a more formal manner."

It is needless to say how glad Sforza was, in the then situation of his affairs, to promise his concurrence in the terms which had been mooted between him and Philip during the whole of the campaign. Shortly afterwards a duly authorised ambassador arrived from Milan, making formal offers of peace, and investing Sforza with full power to act as mediator on the occasion. As the Florentines and Venetians were heartily sick of a war which, for the third year, was consuming their resources without the prospect of any further advantage, their delegates were willing enough to agree to the armistice on the conditions proposed. To Piccinino alone of the combatants the messengers of peace were harbingers of grief. He knew nothing of what was going on in the opposite camp till, the preliminaries having been arranged, he received formal orders from Philip to desist from hostilities. For a time he could set no bounds to his indignation : he saw himself

suddenly deprived of the fruits of a well-devised plan of operations; he complained bitterly that the duke had left everything to the commander-in-chief of the enemy, without deigning to consult his own general; that after he had spent so much of his time, and exhausted so much of his energy, in the defence of the Milanese, Philip, rather than assign to him a single city, had given over the fairest provinces in his dominions to one who, for the last three years, had been his bitterest enemy. He even refused to obey orders till the duke threatened to attack him with his own soldiers, in conjunction with those of the Florentines and Venetians. He then withdrew from the field of operations with much the same feelings that an exile quits his country, and entered the camp of his opponent. Here, for a time, all present disappointment as well as former rivalship was forgotten; the two generals met on the same easy terms as their two great preceptors in the art of war had done eighteen years before: they each declared that they had never felt any personal enmity towards the other, and each expressed admiration for the ability and confidence in the honour of his opponent.

The circumstance that Sforza, the first Italian general of the day, should have brought his army into such a perilous situation at Martinengo could not fail to excite suspicion among the Venetians. His enemies openly declared that he deserved the punishment of Carmagnola. The best vindication of his conduct is, that on hearing of their insinuations he immediately

went to Venice, and succeeded in clearing himself to the satisfaction of that jealous and crafty republic. Nevertheless it cannot be supposed that, if he had not been more intent upon treating than upon fighting, he would have been so completely outgeneralled by a man whom he had so often beaten before. But it must be allowed that, if he made favourable terms for himself, he equally consulted the advantage of his employers, and that they gained more by his negotiations on this occasion than they might have done after the most decisive victory. Thus, though a stern moralist might censure, certainly no Italian government could condemn, the course that he had taken. Of this the Venetians must have been aware, when they allowed him to depart in peace to enjoy the fruits of his labour.

It was natural that Sforza should insist on Philip fulfilling his engagement with him before the final ratification of the peace. Accordingly, after his return from Venice, he was allowed to take the entire possession of Cremona, to station his troops in the surrounding territory, and to establish himself in the citadel. Shortly afterwards Bianca Maria, then only in her sixteenth year, entered into the same city for the purpose of being duly installed as its mistress, and of celebrating her nuptials with the first captain of the age. It was finally arranged that the wedding, which was to bring a duchy to the son of a peasant of Cotignola, should be solemnised on the 22d of October. On that day the young heiress, accom-

panied by a magnificent retinue of the chief men both of Milan and Cremona, went in state to the church of St Sigismond, a little distance from the city. Francesco Sforza also repaired thither, escorted by the first captains of his army, and ten troops of cavalry mounted on the most magnificent horses, and equipped in armour resplendent with the finest gold and silver ornaments of the day. For the purpose of giving further effect to the spectacle, and possibly also of guarding against any surprise, he had sent on a body of infantry to mount guard at the gates, and to occupy the strong posts of the city. After the conclusion of the ceremony, the bride and bridegroom repaired, amidst the plaudits of the assembled citizens, to the fortress of Santa Croce, where the most suitable preparations for their reception had been made.

Holidays were observed for several days after in Cremona; the shops were shut, all public business was suspended, there was no sound but that of festivity and merriment. Thus, at the age of forty, had the son of a peasant of Cotignola become possessor of a fair province in the centre of the peninsula, several fiefs in the kingdom of Naples, and one of the best principalities in Lombardy, and was married to the heiress of the most powerful of Italian sovereigns.

Sforza, having thus obtained the long-promised rewards from Philip, did not fail to perform his part of the agreement. On the 20th November, not quite a month after the wedding, a treaty was signed putting an end to the war which, for three years, had devastated all

the country between the Alps and the Po. The marquis of Mantua, who had forsaken the Venetians in the time of their distress, paid the penalty of his desertion by being obliged to leave in the hands of his former allies all the places he had lost during the two last years of the war.

BOOK FOURTH.

LIFE OF FRANCESCO SFORZA, FROM HIS MARRIAGE WITH BIANCA MARIA TILL THE DEATH OF FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI, 1441-1447.

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CHAPTER I.

VIEWS OF THE OTHER ITALIAN POTENTATES TOWARDS SFORZA.—ALPHONSO'S ATTACK UPON SFORZA'S FIEFS.—DEATH OF NICHOLAS, MARQUIS OF FERRARA.—INTRIGUES OF PHILIP WITH EUGENIUS.—THE CITY OF NAPLES TAKEN BY THE ARAGONESE.—RENÉ OF ANJOU RESIGNS HIS CLAIMS TO THE CROWN.—SUCCESSIVE ATTACKS OF NICOLO PICCININO ON SFORZA'S DOMINIONS.—ALPHONSO DEPRIVES HIM OF HIS REMAINING FIEFS IN THE KINGDOM OF NAPLES.—COALITION OF EUGENIUS AND ALPHONSO AGAINST SFORZA—PLANS OF THE LATTER—DUKE OF MILAN INTERPOSES IN HIS FAVOUR—IS DESERTED BY TWO OF HIS GENERALS—HIS REVENGE.—INCREASE OF COSMO DE' MEDICI'S POWER AT FLORENCE—HE ASSISTS SFORZA.—SFORZA DEFEATS PICCININO AT MONTE LORETO.—BIANCA MARIA GIVES BIRTH TO A SON.—REMARK OF EUGENIUS.—CONTINUED DIFFICULTIES OF SFORZA.—FILIPPO MARIA INTERPOSES IN HIS FAVOUR—ENTICES PICCININO TO MILAN.—SFORZA DEFEATS HIS ARMY DURING HIS ABSENCE.—PEACE.—DEATH AND CHARACTER OF NICOLO PICCININO.

THE six years that followed the marriage of Sforza were the least interesting, as they were also the least fortunate, of the whole of his career. To many it might appear that the alliance, offensive and defensive, which he had formed with the Florentines and Venetians, his connection with the house of the Visconti, and the leisure

afforded him by the cessation of hostilities, would have enabled him to establish the foundations of a kingdom as durable as any in Italy. But his origin, his position, and his reputation, all combined to raise him enemies, whom, with all his talents, he was unable to withstand. The princes and potentates of the peninsula could not bear to see the son of a peasant of Cotignola raised to a level with themselves; the minor sovereigns and descendants of feudatory lords, who, like himself, had embraced the profession of arms for the sake of regaining or extending their dominions, were particularly piqued at his rapid elevation. His almost uniform success had excited the envy of the other captains of the day, both those who had learned their profession in the camp of his father, and those who had been trained in the school of Braccio: the latter were his most unrelenting enemies; the former frequently carried on intrigues with his opponents, and often, when fortune seemed to frown on him, openly deserted him. The provinces which he sought to erect into a kingdom were those to which an ambitious sovereign of Italy always directed his attention. The kings of Naples occasionally wished to extend their dominions as far as Bologna. The dukes of Milan coveted all the provinces between the Adriatic and the Apennines, as far as the Abruzzes. Nor was the present incumbent of the Holy See one likely to forego his claim to any part of his dominions because, in the hour of his distress, he had assigned them to an adventurer. The Venetians, indeed, were nominally his allies; but many of them still retained

the sentiments which they had expressed to the Florentines when he refused to go north of the Po. Cosmo de' Medici, the ruling man at Florence, was more favourably disposed towards him than others, and he, with many of the wisest of his countrymen, regarded the establishment of his kingdom at Ancona as a useful check upon the dukes of Milan and the sovereigns of Naples; but he, though extremely popular, was not omnipotent in the republic, and the citizens were not likely to risk much in assisting a man whom they regarded as an upstart adventurer. Had Sforza possessed less talents, he might perhaps have been allowed to rule his territories in peace; but it was well known that he would not consent to be a sovereign in name without being one in reality; and that, if he were once established in his present position, he might extend his dominions over the neighbouring states. These considerations will suffice to explain the inveteracy of his foes, and the lukewarmness of those who called themselves his friends. For some time we shall see him vainly endeavouring to maintain an unequal struggle against the former, almost always victorious in the field, but gradually obliged to give way to their superior numbers, and to their comparatively inexhaustible resources.

The first enemy that he had to contend with, after his marriage, was Alphonso of Aragon, one of the claimants for the kingdom of Naples. For a long time, Elizabeth, the wife of René of Anjou, had maintained an unequal contest against Alphonso in that kingdom. Though she was inferior to him in resources, and though

she had no generals capable of opposing him in the field, a feeling of chivalry caused all the old partisans of her house to continue supporting her. But the chivalrous feelings which a woman only can inspire had been extinguished by the arrival of her husband, in the year 1438. That monarch, having exhausted his treasure in paying the ransom required for his liberation, was destitute of the sinews of war; and though he was popular in his manner, and by no means deficient in talent, those who had risked much in support of his wife were not inclined to continue the contest for him at their own expense. The principal towns and castles throughout the land had gradually fallen into the hands of the Aragonese; and in the year 1440 René possessed little in the coveted territory beyond the city of Naples.

Up to this period, Alphonso had shown no wish to attack the fiefs that had been granted by his predecessors to the elder Sforza. But he was not unmindful of the demonstration that Francesco had made in favour of René; he knew that his military talents were at least equal to those of his father, of which he had already had experience; and now it appeared to him that his adversary's only chance lay in the assistance that the possession of those fiefs might then, or at some future time, allow that captain to render him. At the same time, the city of Naples, to which he was then laying siege, derived no inconsiderable supplies from one of the principal of his cities, Benevento. Determined to take away all remaining ground of hope from his rival, he had, in the year 1440, made himself master of it,

and several other places belonging to Sforza. There can be no doubt but that the duke of Milan, who was at that time sore pressed by Sforza, and anxious by any means to draw him out of his own territories, had prompted him to this course. But Sforza was then occupied with the war in Lombardy, and was too much intent upon reducing Philip's own dominions, to bestow much attention on the defence of the isolated fiefs that had been granted to his father. When Alphonso pursued the same course in the following year, he sent a small force against him, under the command of his brother, Alexander, and of Cæsar Martinengo; and they, though defeated in some quarters, succeeded in regaining some places in the Abruzzes. After the peace, and his marriage with the daughter of Philip, he was probably of opinion that his father-in-law would have settled all differences between Alphonso and himself; for he remained some time without taking any steps to defend his Neapolitan possessions, and turned a deaf ear to René's solicitations for assistance. It is not unlikely that he might have considered these aggressions of Alphonso as a mere diversion in favour of Philip, and that he therefore expected they would be discontinued, and all that had been taken from him would be restored on his coming to terms with the latter. Everything seemed likely to answer his expectations during the life of the marquis of Este. There is no certain record of the extent to which that excellent prince may have guided Philip, either in opening the negotiations or after the peace; but if we may

judge by subsequent events, his influence must have been great. After he departed this life, on the 26th of December 1441, a sudden change took place in the mutual behaviour of the father and husband of Bianca Maria. Early in the following month, the latter set out to fight for his fiefs, and to render assistance to René in the kingdom of Naples. At the same time, the former, with the view of assisting Alphonso, wrote word to Eugenius that the time was now come for recovering the March of Ancona, and offered to place the services of Nicolo Piccinino at his disposal for that purpose. And though it was but a very short time since Sforza had commanded the troops of a coalition which was supported by the pope—though he had been recognised by that same pontiff as arbiter of the peace of Italy—though he was at that very instant marching to the assistance of his ally, René, Eugenius at once disregarded every obligation of gratitude and consistency, and closed with the offer of Philip. Nicolo Piccinino, having been appointed gonfalonier of the church, lost no time in invading the territories of one of whom he had never ceased to be jealous, and began the campaign by taking the city of Todi by surprise.

This attack of Piccinino produced the much-desired effect of preventing Sforza from entering the kingdom of Naples, and of allowing Alphonso to continue the siege of the city. The inhabitants had already begun to suffer from the scarcity of provisions; but being animated by the presence of their beloved René, they con-

tinued to hold out with the greatest fortitude, and murmured not at the privations which their sovereign shared with them. At last the fortune of war declared in favour of the besiegers. Two master-masons of the Neapolitans, having been made prisoners by the Aragonese, pointed out to their captors the aqueduct by which, nearly one thousand years before, Belisarius had effected an entrance into the city. King René, being aware of its existence, had blocked it up in every possible manner, and had ordered it to be continually watched by a guard; but the apparent impossibility of any one going through a passage so narrow had made his officers neglect this latter precaution. On the night of Saturday the 2d of June, forty, or, according to others, three hundred soldiers of Alphonso made their way through it into the city, and lay hid in a house adjoining its entrance till the morning. At daybreak, Alphonso ordered a vigorous assault to be made on the part of the walls that was most distant from the aqueduct. When the attention of the besieged was drawn thither, the Aragonese soldiers, having issued from their hiding-place, possessed themselves of the nearest gate and hoisted their flag on the tower above it. The capture of the city soon followed, and king René, after having performed prodigies of valour, was obliged to retire to the fortress of Castel Nuovo. When a fresh supply of provisions had been introduced there, the unfortunate monarch betook himself to Florence, where he met Pope Eugenius, whom he bitterly reproached for having prevented Sforza from coming to his assis-

tance. The pope consoled him by formally investing him with the crown he had caused him to lose. René, having received this second experience of the inconstancy of fortune, retired to Provence, to solace himself with his singers and players; and being unwilling any longer to risk the safety of his friends in a contest which he now deemed to be hopeless, he made a formal resignation of his claims to the kingdom of Naples.

In the mean time, the pope and his gonfalonier were annoying Sforza in every manner that their malice could suggest or their treachery effect. As soon as the latter had become aware of their intentions, he established his headquarters at Jesi along with his wife. Though he had not sufficient force to risk a general engagement, he continued to watch, to retard, and to embarrass the movements of his enemies. For this reason he allowed several places to fall into their hands, till on one occasion he managed, by cutting off their supplies and hemming in their army, to place them in the same difficulties that he himself had been in at Martinengo. There was nothing left for Piccinino but to attack to disadvantage, or to submit; and as he was not the man to do the former, it was arranged by the mediation of Bernardo de' Medici, the Florentine commissioner in the opposite camp, that he should be allowed to bring his army out of the dominions of Sforza, and abstain from making any attack on them for the future. Sforza then started a second time to recover his lost fiefs in the kingdom of Naples; but as soon as he had set out on his expedition, Piccinino made a treacherous attack on

Tolentino, and was again glad to purchase peace on the same conditions. Sforza then once more led his troops in the direction of Tronto; but he had not proceeded far before Piccinino made a third attack upon his provinces, in which, after having acquired possession of several of the strong places, he took and pillaged Assisi, one of the most important cities in the March of Ancona. When gravely upbraided for these frequent breaches of faith, which come under the class of those which are condemned by Machiavelli,* in his Discourses on Livy, he replied that he did not consider himself bound to respect any oath or treaty which was inimical to the interests of the church—a strange excuse to come from one who, for about eight years, had given Eugenius more annoyance than any other condottiere in Italy.

While Sforza was thus retained in the province of Ancona, Alphonso profited by the occasion to make himself master of the fiefs that still remained to him in the territory of Naples. As none of them contained a force sufficient to make any effectual opposition, they all fell into his hands; and before the end of the year many of the best generals of the count, beholding the number of those that were against him, and seeing his dominions gradually pass from him, deserted to his enemies. Thus, in little more than twelve months after he had been the arbiter of Italy, and had crowned his

* *Discorsi*, lib. ii. c. 4., entitled "Come usare la fraude nel maneggiare la guerra è cosa gloriosa;" in which he goes on to say, "Diro solo questo, ch' io non intendo quella fraude gloriosa, che ti fa romper la fede."

fortune by a marriage which opened such splendid views to his ambition, he beheld himself stripped of his patrimony, deserted by a large portion of his troops, and surrounded by enemies determined to deprive him of the remainder of his possessions.

The winter of 1442 and 1443 afforded to all parties an opportunity of reviewing their positions and taking measures for the future. René's formal resignation of the crown of Naples rendered Sforza's prospects more gloomy than before. Eugenius, no longer fettered by his engagements with the king of Anjou, was now able openly to enter into an alliance with Alphonso; he acknowledged him as the lawful sovereign of Naples; confirmed him in the possession of the fiefs that had been given to the elder Sforza, and legitimised his natural son Ferdinand, whom he wished to be his heir. On the other hand, he received from him promises of assistance to expel the man whom he most hated from the March of Ancona. Sforza, having neither money nor troops of his own sufficient to resist this formidable coalition, sent to demand both from the Venetians and the Florentines, reminding them of their engagement to assist him to repel any attack that might be made on his dominions, and representing to them the dangers they must incur if Alphonso, by conquering the whole of his territory, should extend his frontiers to those of the duke of Milan. He does not appear, however, to have received any considerable assistance; for he was able to muster only eight thousand men to oppose the twenty-four thousand which the pope and Alphonso

were bringing against him. Being, therefore, obliged to confine himself to defensive operations, he placed in each of the towns, and the fortresses which commanded the passes of the Apennines, garrisons under the command of those whom he thought least likely to desert him. He took up his own headquarters at Fano, a town belonging to Sigismund Malatesta, who had lately married his daughter, and which, from being situated on the shores of the Adriatic, and being remarkable for the strength of its fortifications, would enable him to continue his communications with the Venetians during a siege of almost any duration. He also took the greatest pains about the fortifying of Firmo, another town in a commanding position in the March of Ancona. Having made these preparations, he determined to defend every mountain-pass, every stronghold, and every city to the last, hoping that in the mean time he might receive some assistance from his friends, or that something would occur to distract the councils of his enemies.

The wisdom of his plans was soon made manifest by their success. His father-in-law, however jealous he might have been of the high position which he had held at the beginning of the year, did not wish to see him utterly prostrated before his enemies, and determined to interpose in his favour. The immediate occasion of his doing so was his hearing from the ambassadors whom he had sent to the camp of Alphonso, of the intended defection of one of his generals, Troilus, whom Sforza had left in the command of the garrison of Jesi. To

enable his son-in-law to make head against his present adversities, he warned him of his impending danger. Sforza, knowing the dislike with which Philip had always regarded Troilus, was at first reluctant to credit these intimations; nevertheless he accepted them as indications of a less hostile inclination on the part of his father-in-law, and sent ambassadors, praying him to interpose in his favour. These requests were also backed by the Venetians and the Florentines, who were less grudging of their mediation than of their money. The result was, that Philip sent to Alphonso, requesting him, as he had already done enough for his honour, and for the security of his dominions, to desist from further hostilities against his son-in-law. Much as Alphonso must have been by this time accustomed to the wayward and eccentric disposition of Philip, he could not refrain from expressing his surprise at this message. He professed himself unable to understand why Philip, who had been the first to suggest to Eugenius that he should make an effort to recover the territory that he had assigned to Sforza, should wish him to desist, now that he had almost effected his purpose; still less could he comprehend why he should have complied with the wishes of the Florentines and Venetians, without having first communicated with him: he further alleged that the duke ought at least to have stipulated that Sforza should have given up the towns to which he himself laid claim, and concluded by refusing to desist from his enterprise. Though several communications passed between them, Alphonso continued to take the cities that belonged to

Sforza, and at last threatened him in his headquarters at Fano. Hereupon Sigismund, to save his own city, entered into negotiations with Alphonso to give up his father-in-law into his hands; but his designs were happily frustrated by the vigilance of the latter.

In the mean time Troilus, as had been predicted by Philip, accompanied by one Brunoro, deserted to the king of Naples. Thus reinforced by upwards of two thousand horse besides infantry, that monarch marched to Firmo, and tried in vain to persuade its inhabitants to return to the allegiance of the pope, after which, being unwilling to undertake the siege of a place so strongly fortified by nature and art, he retired to some strongholds in the vicinity. Sforza then made use of the following stratagem to avenge himself on Troilus and Brunoro. He ordered his brother, Alexander, to whom he had intrusted the defence of Firmo, to address letters to them, containing allusions to their intention to desert Alphonso, which he was to allow to fall into the hands of the enemy. The stratagem produced the desired effect. The Neapolitan king, on receiving the letters, could not be persuaded that Troilus and Brunoro were not acting a double part; he therefore had them sent to Naples, where they were detained prisoners in a fortress, and had their possessions divided among his soldiers.* He

* There is a remarkable story told by Muratori as to the mode in which Brunoro was liberated from prison. A damsel named Bona, who had followed him in a man's dress through all his campaigns, went about to the different sovereigns in Italy, and persuaded them to intercede in his favour. As soon as he had been set at liberty through her agency, she procured him a command in the army of the Venetians, with a salary of twenty thousand ducats per annum. Brunoro, to recompense her for these favours, made her

himself, shortly afterwards, was persuaded by Philip to retire to Naples, leaving Nicolo Piccinino to finish the campaign.

In the mean time, friendly messages continued to pass between Philip and Sforza; and events had occurred which left the allies of the latter more at liberty than they had been to render him the assistance he needed so much. In the early part of the year, Bologna had been disturbed by a contention, caused by an endeavour of Annibal Bentivoglio to displace Francesco, the son of Nicolo Piccinino, in the government of the city. Both the Venetians and Florentines took part with the former, and they thought it not improbable that their interference might provoke the resentment of the duke, and possibly lead to a renewal of the war. They were, for this reason, unwilling to exhaust their resources in rendering assistance to Sforza. But the complete success of Bentivoglio, and the indifference of Philip as to the result of the contest, quieted their apprehensions on this score, and left them more masters of their resources than before. Moreover, Cosmo de' Medici was daily becoming more powerful at Florence. Though extremely popular with the lower orders of the citizens, his rise had not been regarded without jealousy by many of those who still remained at Florence; among others, by Neri di Geni Caponi, who had commanded at the battle of Anghiari, and Balduccio d' Anghiari, a condottiere of no small

his wife.' She followed him through the whole of his military career, often performing prodigies of valour, and even accompanying him to the Negropont, when he went to fight against the Turks. She died shortly after him, during her voyage back to Italy.

eminence. In the present year, the latter had made himself so odious to Bartolomeo, the gonfalonier of justice, and to other members of the government, that they determined upon getting rid of him. To effect this, the gonfalonier sent and requested Balduccio to attend him at the palace. When he had come thither, he entered into conversation with him, and led him, suspecting nothing, through a suite of corridors, till he had arrived at the door of his private apartments, upon which a number of armed men, who had been placed there for the purpose, rushed out and despatched him. His body was then thrown from the palace, and the head was cut off and exhibited, to warn others of the fate they must expect if they gave any trouble to the ruling men of the state.

Thus the ascendency of Cosmo de' Medici was more completely established than before; and he, as well as the chief men at Venice, began now to see the impolicy of allowing Sforza to fall a sacrifice to the ambition of Alphonso. After they had persuaded the Duke of Milan to interfere in his favour, they sent a body of four thousand horse to his assistance. The approach of these reinforcements, after the departure of Alphonso for Naples, determined Sforza once more to act on the offensive. As the autumn rain had already set in, Piccinino did not much apprehend an attack; but when he heard that the allied forces had arrived at Rimini, he took up a position at Monte Loreto, to prevent them forming a junction with Sforza at Fano. On the fifth of November, the count started with all the troops

he could collect; he easily drove before him a small force that Piccinino had sent to defend the pass of the Foglia at Monte Abbate, and proceeded to pitch his camp between the river and Monte Loreto. But as his advanced-guard under Sigismund was immediately attacked and driven in by Piccinino, he brought up all his army, and determined upon risking a general action. At the same time he sent word to the Venetian and Florentine commanders to attack the enemy in the rear, while he was engaged with him in front.

Neither the strength of their position on Monte Loreto, nor the confidence with which a series of successes had inspired them, enabled the soldiers of Piccinino to withstand this united onset; they were driven from their heights, and fled in the greatest confusion. The castle on Monte Abbate, with all its stores, fell into the hands of the victors. After the battle, the rain flowed in torrents, and the defeated troops, who in the morning had been flushed with the triumphs of a whole campaign, and anticipated an easy victory on that day, were obliged to wander all night exposed to the inclemency of the weather, or to seek some slight shelter in the woods which covered the sides of the mountain.

If Sforza had been fighting the battles of others, it is probable that he would have been content with the mere acquisition of this victory, and brought his army to winter-quarters at that advanced period of the season. But, as he was now warring on his own account, he was anxious, ere Piccinino had time to rally the dis-

comfited forces, to march into the province of Ancona, to recover the cities that had revolted from him at the beginning of the year. He was doomed, however, in his turn, to experience the disadvantage of fighting with the soldiers of others: a great part of his army was composed of the troops of his son-in-law, Sigismund Malatesta, who refused to allow them to advance farther till he had conquered Pesaro, and one or two other places between Rimini and Fano. This conduct on the part of his son-in-law was extremely vexatious to Sforza; but not being now in a position to dictate to his allies, he was obliged to champ the bit, galling as it was, and to obey. Having, before the end of November, put Sigismund in possession of the country surrounding Pesaro, with several of the cities that he principally coveted, he immediately marched into the territory of Ancona, thinking that it might not yet be too late to profit by the victory of Monte Loreto. But there was no one particular in which the military genius of Piccinino was more conspicuous than in the facility with which he rallied a defeated army, and often retarded the advance of a victorious enemy. On the present occasion, he turned these qualities to account. Having placed in all the principal cities and castles garrisons of picked men, commanded by officers on whom he had the greatest reliance, he himself took up a very strong position at Montecchio. In consequence of these dispositions, Sforza could make but little impression on the territory of Ancona; so, after a few places of minor importance had fallen into his hands,

he was obliged to retire for the winter to Firmo. His Florentine and Venetian allies took up their quarters in the adjoining cities of Tuscany and Ravenna respectively. Thus ended the season, in which Francesco Sforza completed the forty-second year of his own life, and the twentieth that had elapsed since the death of his father—a season which began with disaster, and was only redeemed by the most partial success, and the events of which threatened to put an end to the magnificent hopes which he had never ceased to entertain, and which, two years before, he had every prospect of realising.

The subsequent year opened with an event which augured well not only for his domestic happiness, but also for his political success. His wife, Bianca Maria, having received a pass from Piccinino, had been allowed to go through the theatre of the war to Firmo, and there, on the 30th day of January 1444, she presented her husband with a son and heir, just twenty-six months after her marriage. Sforza was not actually at Firmo at the time; but on the news being brought to him by a confidential attendant, he was unable to contain himself with joy. But though overpowered by his tenderer feelings, he lost no time in turning to the best account an event which formed such a strong bond of union between one of the most powerful princes of Italy and himself. He therefore ordered Gaspar of Pesaro, the physician under whose auspices the event had taken place, to hasten with the intelligence to the father of Bianca. At the same time, he requested Philip to send

word what name he should wish to be given to his grandson. Even Philip, though intent on intrigue of all sorts, and profound master of dissimulation, could not altogether conceal his feelings; and, in accordance with the wishes of the parents, he expressed a wish that the child should be named Galeazzo Maria. Eugenius, when he heard of the event, is reported to have said that another Lucifer had come into the world. And, indeed, one cannot wonder at an incumbent of the Holy See, still less at Eugenius, applying this term to the family of Sforza. The first of that name had made himself so odious to John XXIII. that he gratified his spleen by exhibiting caricatures of him in the most public places in Rome; and the present pontiff had beheld himself stripped of half his dominions by his son, and had not hitherto, though aided by the most powerful of the princes, and the most skilful of the captains of Italy, been able to expel him thence. The child that called forth this remark was duly baptised on the 17th of the following March, just before the commencement of the season in which Italian condottieri began their business.

The prospects of Francesco at the opening of the year were almost as gloomy as they had been in the preceding one. His opponent was well supplied with money and troops by Alphonso as well as by Eugenius, while his own resources were utterly exhausted. The Venetians, in compliance with his earnest entreaties, had sent him a small sum of money by his son-in-law Sigismund; but he, after having distributed a part of what he had received among the soldiers at Firmo, retained the rest,

under various pretences, for himself. Nicolo Piccinino opened the campaign by making excursions in the vicinity of the last-named city. A considerable body of troops were also advancing against this place from the south under the command of Cæsar Martinengo. Under these circumstances Sforza confined himself to the defence of the strip of territory along the coast of the Adriatic, and with the assistance of Ciarpellio, one of the ablest condottieri of the time, managed to make tolerable head, and even sometimes to gain no inconsiderable advantages over his enemies. But the Florentines and Venetians still delayed sending him the succours that were so necessary to enable him to meet his adversaries on any terms of equality; and his son-in-law Sigismund, though he had during the last year been put in possession of almost all the territory he desired by the assistance of his father-in-law, retired with his troops to Fano. To add to his discomfitures, Alphonso, at the solicitation of Piccinino and Eugenius, had sent into the Adriatic a fleet of eighteen galleys, by which he effectually cut off all hopes of his receiving supplies from the Venetians.

All circumstances seemed now to combine in promising to Piccinino as effectual a triumph over his rival in arms as he had expected at Martinengo; but he was frustrated by interference from the same quarter as on that occasion. Even in the preceding year Philip had shown himself more anxious for the humiliation than for the total ruin of Sforza, and he might now possibly have been moved by some feelings of affection for the

father of his grandchild, like those by which Sophocles represented the stern resolve of Ajax* to be shaken. Accordingly he sent a message to Piccinino, earnestly entreating him to make terms with his son-in-law, and to come to Milan to speak with him on matters of importance, which could not be satisfactorily explained in writing. With the first of these requests Piccinino positively refused to comply; but, not knowing what good things might be in store for him at Milan, he went thither, to the great discomfiture of Eugenius, who dreaded what Sforza, despite the great inferiority of his force, might do in his absence.

Subsequent events showed that the pope's apprehensions were well founded. Francesco Piccinino, to whom Niçolo had intrusted the command of his army during his absence, took one or two places of minor importance which lay between him and Firmo, and then marched in the direction of that place with a view of forming a junction with the troops of the king of Naples. This Sforza determined, if possible, to prevent; and having collected all his disposable forces with what stock of provisions he could muster, amounting only to what was sufficient for eight days, he advanced to meet the papal troops under the command of Francesco Piccinino. Happily for him, that general, relying probably on the superiority of his numbers, had

* "Κἀγὼ γὰρ, ὃς τὰ δειν' ἐκαρτέρουν τότε,
βαφῇ σίδηρος ὡς ἐθηλύνθην στόμα
πρὸς τῆσδε τῆς γυναικός, οἰκτείρω δέ νιν
χήραν παῤ ἐχθροῖς παιδά τ' ὀρφανον λιπεῖν."
SOPH., *Ajax*, v. 650 (Ed. Mus.)

brought them down from the heights where they had encamped to the low country in the vicinity of Monte Olmo, so that he was able to attack them before his provisions were exhausted.

Sforza had now at least one advantage that Machiavelli* recommends every general to seek—as his supplies were almost at an end, and retreat or defeat would have ruined him alike, he was compelled to fight for his very existence. But his enemies were under no such necessity; they might decline battle if they wished, or, if worsted, they might rally without any extraordinary loss. He made the most skilful preparations for the attack, and delivered to his soldiers a speech full of his usual confidence, which he concluded by reminding them that they were about to fight with those whom, only a few months before, they had totally routed at Monte Loreto. Some recollections of this defeat seem also to have been revived in the opposite camp, for it was debated among the Piccininos and their generals whether they should send to offer Sforza the terms that had been suggested by Filippo Maria. But the legate of the pope would not allow any peace to be talked of so long as Sforza retained the smallest portion of the territory of Ancona, and his influence was so great that they were obliged to give battle. At the same time he promised rewards in heaven to those who should suffer in the cause of the church, and denounced eternal damnation against those who were fighting against it. But European soldiers have seldom been

* *Discorsi sopra Tito Livio*, lib. iii. cap. 12.

fanatics; and as the Italians, who saw the popes thinking, feeling, and acting in the same manner, and subject to the same reverses as other men, were least so of all, the soldiers of Eugenius were not much moved by language of this sort. On the other hand, those of the opposite camp were excited by the brilliant earthly prospects of booty and riches held out to them by their leader.

The result of the engagement was a complete victory gained by Sforza, which was in no small degree brought about by the great confidence that they all felt in him, and the terror with which his very name inspired his adversaries. The whole of the camp, with the baggage, military stores, and a large number of prisoners, including Francesco Piccinino and many of the principal officers, fell into the hands of the victors. Among the captives were a body of men who, having in the course of the engagement come upon Sforza at a time that he had taken off his helmet, and was at some distance from his attendants, had him in their power; but, in the words of his biographer, the dignity of his appearance was so great, and his name was so popular, that they made no attempt to injure him. As a reward for their generosity, the victorious general restored them to liberty without ransom.

Happily for the conqueror, he was able to turn this victory to better account than that which he had in the previous year gained at Monte Loreto. Having reduced all the strong places between Firmo and Ascoli, he marched to the neighbourhood of Ancona. He was

there, however, informed that the Venetians, the Florentines, and the duke of Milan, had arranged the terms of a peace between Eugenius and himself, in which it was stipulated that he was to retain all the cities he could conquer before October 18, and that the rest were to be subject to Eugenius, but to pay tribute to him. He made such good use of his time that before the appointed day the whole of the disputed territory, with the exception of the city of Ancona and three others, had fallen into his hands.

As it has never transpired what the matters were which Philip was so anxious to communicate verbally with Piccinino, there is no reason to suppose that he had any motive in sending for him except to give Sforza a chance of retrieving his affairs. Nothing, at all events, happened of a nature to console Piccinino for the loss of his army and the captivity of his son, for shortly after his arrival in Lombardy he was seized with a lingering illness, from which he never recovered. Indeed, his position was not such as to suggest the most agreeable reflections. In the words of M. Sismondi, "though he had seen so many victories, and was sixty-four years of age, he had not where to lay his head. All the other great generals of his age had been elevated to the rank of sovereigns; he seemed to have had, at least, as good a claim as any other to this distinction, because the principality as well as the army of Braccio ought by right to have devolved on him; and withal he was not more rich or more powerful at the end of his career than he had been at its commencement. He had lost

Bologna, which he had hoped to make the capital of a kingdom for himself; two defeats following one another so rapidly had exhausted his resources and scattered his soldiers; one of his sons was a prisoner, another a fugitive; and he had no dependence except on the generosity of a prince accused throughout all Italy of inconsistency, and occasionally of perfidy;" and this prince had ruined him by deceiving him. Moreover, Visconti was already advanced in years, and he seemed to have arranged that Piccinino's bitterest enemy should succeed him. On two successive occasions, just when he thought his greatness was ripening, the duke's conduct had, like a "killing frost, nipped his root" and caused him to fall. "Weary and old with service," he fell a victim to chagrin and disease on the 15th of October 1444.

If Piccinino was inferior to Sforza in the field, he made up for it by the rapidity of his movements and his fertility in devising expedients; and though often worsted in battle, he generally retrieved his disasters by the celerity with which he rallied his troops. It is impossible to defend his jealousy of Sforza, and the many acts of treachery to which he was prompted thereby; but, in comparing the conduct of the two generals in this respect, it must be recollected that the more frequent victories and the more prosperous career of the latter, rendered him less amenable to the feelings which must have been experienced by his older and less fortunate rival. His fidelity to his employers, and his constancy in executing the tasks committed to him, have never been questioned. The greatest proof both of his

talents and character is afforded by the eagerness with which he was sought after by the opponents of Sforza, and the rapid success of that general whenever he was not kept in check by him.

In the same year also expired another of Philip's ablest allies, Francesco Gonzaga, the marquis of Mantua. By the loss of these two men the duke was bereft of his staunchest supporters, and Sforza was apparently left without any one capable of opposing him in the field.

CHAPTER II.

FILIPPO MARIA TAKES THE SONS OF NICOLO PICCININO INTO HIS SERVICE—MAKES OFFERS TO CIARPELLIO, ONE OF SFORZA'S GENERALS.—SFORZA ORDERS CIARPELLIO TO BE PUT TO DEATH.—ANGER OF FILIPPO MARIA.—SFORZA QUARRELS WITH SIGISMUND MALATESTA.—AFFAIRS OF BOLOGNA.—RECOMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES.—MARCH OF ANCONA.—PLAN ADOPTED BY SFORZA.—GRADUAL EXHAUSTION OF HIS RESOURCES—REVOLT OF SEVERAL OF HIS CITIES—MAKES AN EXPEDITION AGAINST ROME—FAILS.—ANCONA TAKEN BY ALPHONSO.—ALEXANDER SFORZA JOINS HIS BROTHER'S ENEMIES.—FILIPPO MARIA ENDEAVOURS TO DEPRIVE SFORZA OF THE CITIES HE HAD GIVEN HIM ON HIS MARRIAGE—IS OPPOSED BY THE VENETIANS AND FLORENTINES.—VENETIANS GAIN A COMPLETE VICTORY OVER THE MILANESE AT CASALE.—SFORZA CONCLUDES A TRUCE WITH THE POPE AND THE KING OF NAPLES.—OVERTURES MADE TO HIM BY FILIPPO MARIA.—DEATH AND CHARACTER OF EUGENIUS.—SFORZA MAKES TERMS WITH PHILIP—SUSPICIONS INFUSED INTO THE MIND OF THE LATTER—HIS ORDERS TO SFORZA.—VENETIANS LAY SIEGE TO MILAN.—SFORZA SENDS HIS CHILDREN TO CREMONA.—DEATH AND CHARACTER OF FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI.

AFTER the satisfactory conclusion of the war with the pope, Sforza retired to Firmo, there to enjoy the society of his wife and his infant. To all appearance his domestic happiness was likely to be some little time without interruption. His position was no longer such as to excite the jealousy of the ruling powers of Italy: his territories in the March of Ancona had been curtailed by Piccinino; Alphonso was in possession of all the fiefs he had once held in the kingdom of Naples; the birth of his son might make Philip less inconstant in his conduct towards him than heretofore; and Euge-

nius, having already recovered the greater part of his territories in the March of Ancona, might be reluctant to provoke the hostility of one who, since Piccinino was dead, had no one capable of opposing him in the field. But the elements of peace did not exist in Italy. Every province contained towns subject to petty tyrants, and the majority of these towns were divided into parties. Neither the tyrants nor their subjects were ever at rest; and Philip's passion for intrigue was so great that he was generally concerned in their disputes. Even his affection for his grandson could not make him constant in one line of conduct. Hence the sword, though sheathed in Italy, was ere long drawn out of its scabbard by the same parties who had wielded it before.

Though Philip had but inadequately rewarded the services of Piccinino, he bitterly mourned his death. The memory of the departed general stirred him not to let the hopeful services of his son perish likewise, and he availed himself of the claims which his relationship, as well as his friendly mediation of the preceding year, had given him over Sforza, to obtain the liberty of the one that was still in captivity. His intention, doubtless, was to retain at his disposal the sons' services, in the same manner as he availed himself of those of their father. But further acquaintance seemed to have generated in him some mistrust in their capacity to fill his place, for he soon made overtures to Ciarpellio, the ablest of Sforza's generals, and, according to Machiavelli, even put him in possession of some castles in the Milanese. These negotiations did not escape the pene-

tration of the latter; he dreaded to see the best captain in Italy employed by one on whose friendship he had so little reliance; and he knew that Ciarpellio, should he ever become his enemy, would have it in his power to reveal many of his secrets. The practice of the times, as had not long before been shown in the case of Carmagnola, was already in accordance with the maxims published in the next century by Machiavelli.* Sforza could no longer hope to conquer by means of Ciarpellio, because his fidelity was doubtful; it would not answer his purpose to discharge him, lest he should be used against him by others. He therefore deemed himself under the cruel necessity of putting an end to him. He intrusted the accomplishment of this deed to his brother Alexander, who had always shown a dislike to Ciarpellio. The victim was seized, and cast into prison at Firmo, where, after the semblance of a trial, he confessed he had carried on a correspondence with the duke of Milan, and was hung on the 29th of November 1444.

To justify himself in the eyes of the Italians, Sforza publicly declared that he had ascertained that his victim was engaged in a conspiracy against his life. Whether he really possessed any proof, or even any well-grounded suspicion of this fact, cannot now be discovered; but if this was not the case, it is difficult to see in what respect Ciarpellio was more deserving of death than was Sforza himself, when he passed over to the Florentines, after the capture of Lucca, in the year 1427—a pro-

* MACHIAVELLI, *Principe*, cap. 12.

ceeding on his part which seems scarcely to have called forth any animadversion from others. But in these times even men who, like Sforza, stood high with their contemporaries, often allowed their notions of expediency to impel them to deeds of the most ruthless tyranny. However, the commission of this act of severity gave the greatest offence to the duke of Milan, who declared that Ciarpellio had been unjustly put to death, and vowed that he would be revenged on his murderers; and on their part the Florentines and Venetians were not displeased to see the growing seeds of discord between the father-in-law and son-in-law, whose intimate union they dreaded so much.

Ere long other events concurred in developing these seeds. Though the territory of Pesaro had been conquered and given to Sigismund Malatesta after the battle of Monte Loreto, the town still remained in the possession of his uncle, Galeazzo. Sigismund had failed in an attempt to take it by force; but he still hoped, as its present owner had no children, that it might eventually come into his possession. But after the peace of the past year, Francesco Sforza bought the signory of the city from Galeazzo, and presented it to his brother Alexander. At the same time Fossembrune, another city much coveted by Sigismund, was bought by Frederic, count of Urbino and Montefeltro, the representative, and most probably the descendant, of Dante's Guido di Montefeltro.* Sigismund had never been well disposed

* For the contradictory stories concerning the birth and parentage of this prince, see Dennistoun's *Dukes of Urbino*, vol. i. pp. 57, 58.

towards his father-in-law; he was now irritated beyond measure at these transactions; and as he ascribed them chiefly to him, he did all in his power to excite his former enemies against him. This he found to be no difficult task. Philip, irritated on account of the death of Ciarpellio, persuaded Eugenius to take Sigismund into his pay, representing the advantages that the situation of his dominions would give him in making another effort for the recovery of the March of Ancona, or the city of Bologna. Alphonso, also, as several cities on the confines of the territory of Naples had lately revolted from him to Sforza, lent a ready ear to the suggestions of Sigismund.

A fresh source of contention also appeared in Bologna. Since the expulsion of Francesco Piccinino from that city, Annibal Bentivoglio had been the chief man in the government, and had been honoured as the liberator of his country. His position soon roused the jealousy of one Baldassar, a leading man of the powerful family of Canedoli. These two citizens were connected by marriage, but, in the words of Machiavelli, "relationship forms but a slender bond of union among those who aspire to the same honours." The jealousy of the latter had reached such a length that he determined on the murder of Bentivoglio, and accomplished his purpose on the festival of St John the Baptist, just as his victim was going out of church. A tumult soon followed, in which the adherents of Bentivoglio gained the upper hand; Baptista, the head of the family of Canedoli, escaped into his house, and for a time lay

concealed in a vessel of corn; but being delivered up by his servant to the threats of the victors, he was torn in pieces, and his carcass was dragged through the city. As soon as the duke of Milan received intelligence of this transaction, he sent Taliano with fifteen hundred horse and five hundred foot to support the party of the Canedoli; but when that general found that his friends had been driven out of the city, he did not attempt to attack it, but began laying waste the territory, and taking the castles in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, the Florentines and Venetians sent a small force to the assistance of the opposite party. The troops of the different states continued to keep a diligent watch on each other's movements without actually coming to any collision.

The sequel of this revolution, though unconnected with the career of Sforza, is worthy of notice.* The popularity of the house of Bentivoglio was so great that the inhabitants wished, if possible, to be ruled by one of the family; but the only one of its members remaining was a boy six years old, a son of the prince who had just been murdered. It was deemed impossible that he should be elected to a post, the maintenance of which required prompt vigour and action. While they were in this dilemma the count of Poppi, who happened then to be at Bologna, called their attention to a young man of the name of Santi, then resident at Florence. He declared him to be the son of a young woman from the neighbourhood of Poppi, with whom he knew that Her-

* Machiavelli, *Storia di Firenza*, lib. v.

cules Bentivoglio had had intercourse previous to his birth; that Hercules had frequently said that he was his son, and that the resemblance between them was so great that he believed it to be the case. The Bolognese thereon sent to Florence to inquire after the youth. His reputed father, Agnolo da Cascese, being dead, he lived with an uncle, who, when the matter was put before him, referred it to Cosmo de' Medici. All parties were anxious that he should accept the proffered honours; he himself, however, was hesitating about benefiting himself by a report which cast a stain on the memory of his parents, when Cosmo called him aside and said to him, "You have no better counsellor in this matter than yourself, for you have only to take the part that you wish; but you should bear in mind that, if you choose to be the son of Hercules Bentivoglio, you will enter on a career worthy of the name by which you are to be called; but if you choose to be the son of Agnolo da Cascese, you will remain all your life a carver of wood." By these words the youth was sufficiently convinced that for the sake of a sovereignty he might allow aspersions to be cast on the memory of his parents; and having declared his intentions, he was shortly furnished with royal apparel and a retinue of servants and horses. He then accompanied the ambassadors on their return to Bologna, and was received with the greatest acclamations by the inhabitants.

The peace of Italy having been broken, all Sforza's enemies once more united themselves against him. The first appearance of hostilities had rekindled the ambi-

tion of Alphonso as well as the hatred of Eugenius. The latter was fully of Machiavelli's opinion, that a prudent ruler should not observe a treaty when the doing so was to his own disadvantage, and after the circumstances which made him assent to it had ceased to exist;* and so, as soon as he saw the turn that affairs were taking, he took up arms against his former gonfaloniere. Sforza's father-in-law and son-in-law united their forces against him, the former being irritated on account of the execution of Ciarpellio, the latter on account of the sale of Pesaro. The situation of the dominions of Sigismund afforded him every opportunity of annoying Sforza both by open hostilities and by intrigue, while the Milanese forces under Taliano, the pope's forces commanded by Louis, the Patriarch of Aquileia, and those of Alphonso under Ventimiglia, simultaneously directed their steps against him.

To make head against this formidable coalition, Sforza received a tolerable supply of money from his friend, Cosmo de' Medici. Having posted strong garrisons in Jesi and Firmo, places which he looked upon as the keys of the rest of his dominions, and in either of which he might make a considerable stand, if reduced to extremities, he determined to strike a blow at Sigismund before the other enemies whom the malice of that prince had raised up against him could render him assis-

* *Principe*, cap. 18. He, however, thus qualifies this precept, "Se gli uomini, fossero tutti buoni, questo precetto non saria buono, ma perchè sono tristi, e non l' osseverrebeno a te, tu ancora non l' hai da osservare a loro" —("If all men were good, this precept would not be right; but as they are bad, and will not keep faith with you, you must not do so with them.")

tance. His first step was to take Pergola, and one or two other places in the neighbourhood of Jesi, by which he acquired no small quantity of booty for his soldiers, and considerably weakened the position of his enemy. But after he had done this, the simultaneous approach of the hostile armies from different directions prevented his proceeding further against his son-in-law. It now required his utmost skill and attention to hinder his adversaries forming a junction. If the nature of the country had been the same as that of Lombardy, the immense superiority of their forces must have annihilated him; but abounding as it did with mountains, rivers, and fortresses, it gave him every facility for compensating with his skill for the inferiority of his numbers. Owing to this circumstance, he managed to keep his enemies apart during the whole of the season; he retook several towns, and on one occasion gained very considerable advantage over the Milanese general Taliano. If skill and bravery alone could have maintained his position, there is very little doubt but that he would have succeeded; but his resources were rapidly becoming exhausted, and ere long he had difficulties of a fresh nature to embarrass him.

The Wise Man has said, that "for the transgression of a people its rulers are multiplied;" and never were any people destined to experience the misery of a multiplicity of rulers more than the inhabitants of the province which was now the theatre of war. They almost all lived in towns; the towns were invariably in situations of military importance, and they were

constantly taken and retaken by the military adventurers who, either on their own account or for that of their employers, were contending for the possession of the province. A famous simile of Goethe's* may, with great justice, be applied to them; their rulers or their generals might be compared to the smith with his hammer, their land might be compared to the anvil, while they were in the situation of the tin that was between the hammer and the anvil. Woe to them if they continued to receive nothing but blows, according to the caprice of the smith who might be at any time beating them with the hammer! It cannot be matter of surprise that a people so situated should be described by an Italian historian as being unstable by nature.† And Sforza was now doomed to lose as much by this circumstance as he had formerly gained by it. When his fortunes were rising, many of these cities had, of their own accord, opened their gates to him; now, whether it was that they thought his luck was declining, or that they were more likely to be allowed to live in peace under a prelate than a condottiere, they all took the earliest opportunity of revolting from him. In the beginning of the season, the inhabitants of Ascoli had gone over to the pope, after having murdered his brother, Rinaldo Fogliano. And now he was sorely embarrassed by a similar act on the part of those of

* "Diesem Ambos vergleich' ich das Land, dem Hammer den Herscher,
Und dem Volke das Blech das in der Mitte sich krümmt:
Wehe dem armen Blech, wenn nur willkurliche schlage
Ungewiss treffen."

† "*Essendo le Marche per la loro natura istabili.*"—Machiavelli.

Rocca Contrada. This city commanded his communication with Tuscany; its possession had enabled him to prevent the junction of his enemy's armies, and the loss of it seemed so serious in a military light that he afterwards deemed it advisable to contract the plan of his operations. He therefore determined for the present to confine himself to the defence of Firmo and Jesi, thinking that by holding them he might be enabled at some future day to regain his lost possessions. In the former of these places he left his brother Alexander with five hundred foot, and the same number of horse, and put strong garrisons in two fortresses which were on each side of the town. Having provided in the same manner for the defence of Jesi, he concluded the campaign by taking and demolishing several strongholds in the territory of his traitorous son-in-law, and then stationed his forces for the winter both in the neighbourhood of the above-mentioned towns, and in Tuscany. But he was still annoyed by the inconstancy of his subjects: the inhabitants of Firmo resolved to follow the example of their neighbours; and on the 29th November they made a vigorous attack on Alexander, and compelled him to retire to the fortress inside their walls for safety; at the same time they made themselves masters of the two fortresses in the vicinity of their city. Taliano, on hearing of these events, brought his army to the assistance of the insurgents, and blockaded the castle in which Alexander had taken refuge. It could not be taken except by famine; but as its occupants were not furnished with provisions to

hold out, their leader agreed with the enemy that they should be allowed to evacuate it, taking thence their arms, equipments, and baggage.

In this untoward position of his affairs Sforza betook himself to Florence, where he solicited the assistance and received the advice of Cosmo de' Medici. The state of his circumstances was so desperate that it appeared that nothing short of the unlooked-for success, which occasionally attends strokes that in ordinary circumstances would be deemed rash and hazardous, could possibly retrieve them. He, therefore, in accordance with the suggestions of his friend, hesitated not to leave his own dominions defenceless, in order to strike a home-blow at the person who had hitherto shown himself the most persevering and the most inveterate of his enemies. For this purpose he brought together the remnants of his former forces, and determined, as soon as the season would permit, to march direct upon Rome. He was further encouraged to persevere in this plan by the reported disaffection both of the cities of Todi, Orvieto, and Narni, and of several of the principal cardinals and barons of the Holy See.

Against the approach of so formidable an enemy Eugenius defended himself by the arms he knew so well how to wield—excommunication and intrigue. Sforza, whether it was that his spirits were broken, or that his supplies were exhausted, did not execute this plan with the vigour and promptness for which he was generally distinguished. When he had arrived in the neighbourhood of Orvieto and Viterbo, he found that neither

the inhabitants of these cities nor the chief of the men of Rome were disposed to act in accordance with his expectations; so he was obliged to retrace his steps, to the no small disappointment of Cosmo de' Medici and others, who would not have been grieved to have seen the pride of Eugenius humbled in his own capital.

In the mean time Alphonso had collected sufficient force either to strip Sforza of what still remained to him of his dominions, or, if it seemed expedient, to invade the territory of the Florentines. His first measure was to march upon Ancona, the inhabitants of which had refused to act in accordance with the stipulations made at the peace of the year 1444. Having reduced this city, he threatened Sforza at Fossembrune. At the same time, the forces of the duke and the pope, under Taliano and Louis of Aquileia, hemmed in Alexander Sforza in his own town of Pesaro. The latter then found himself surrounded on all sides by enemies. The morality of that age did not require that any man should run the risk of sacrificing himself for the sake of a friend, and Alexander did not think himself bound by ties of either relationship or gratitude to continue a hopeless contest against the enemies of his brother. Acting in obedience to the instinct of self-preservation, on the 18th July he entered into treaty with the legate of the pope, and placed at his disposal the city of Pesaro, with the whole of his troops. By way of making some compensation for this act of treachery, he sent Bianca Maria with her children in safety to Urbino, and wrote a letter to Francesco pleading the dire necessity of his

case; and Francesco, unable any longer to stop the torrent that was directed solely against him, retired to Urbino, there, perhaps, to stave off for a time the ruin which nothing now seemed likely to avert.

In no one thing, perhaps, had Philip ever been so constant as in the hatred which, for the last two years, he had displayed towards the husband of his daughter. Not content with seeing him almost stripped of his dominions on the shores of the Adriatic, he was so goaded on by his passion that he began to take measures to deprive him of the cities which he had given him as a dowry. This proceeding was directly contrary to the terms which he had made with the Florentines and the Venetians, and might possibly provoke their opposition; but the hatred which seemed to have taken possession of his ill-regulated mind, entirely overweighed all other considerations. For the purpose above mentioned he despatched to Cremona an army of five thousand horse and one thousand foot, under the command of Francesco Piccinino and Luigi dal Verme, and at the same time he endeavoured, by means of a leading citizen of that place, Orlando Pallavicino, to carry on intrigues with its inhabitants. He also sent a force against Sforza's other city of Pontremoli.

The duke's violent and insensate conduct soon brought its own retribution, and was the means of saving the man whom he wished to destroy. The Venetians and Florentines, indignant at his want of faith, were determined not to allow the complete ruin of the captain whom they had frequently found so useful in opposing

him. The former, after having despatched a small force to keep Piccinino in check in the Cremonese, tried what they could do by negotiation; but finding this quite ineffectual, they sent Michael Attendolo of Cotignola with a considerable army to defend Cremona. At the same time the Florentines successfully opposed the attack on the city of Pontremoli. Thus Philip, in his eagerness to gratify his hatred or jealousy, found himself once more engaged in a formidable war. But so utterly regardless had he now become of all the ordinary maxims of prudence, that he did not scruple to raise new enemies to himself, by making a fresh attempt against the city of Bologna.

These unlooked-for occurrences seemed likely to open to Sforza a way of escape out of his present difficulties; and it was not long before his hopes were still farther raised, by events which occurred in the enemy's camp. A quarrel on the score of precedence arose between William, the brother of Gian, marquis of Montferrat, and Charles Gonzaga, two of Philip's generals, at Bologna. The former seemed so disgusted at the preference shown to his rival that he lent a ready ear to the offers of the Venetians and Bolognese, and on the night of the 5th of July he passed over to their service, with four hundred horse and one hundred foot. His first act, after so doing, was to attack the forces of his former rival, over whom, scattered as they were through the country, and most likely taken by surprise, he gained an easy victory. At the same time the Florentines offered Taliano, the duke's general against Sforza, the

chief command of all their forces. Either by accident, or through a malicious design of the Florentines, the duke got wind of these intrigues. What the actual intentions of Taliano were does not appear; but the grounds of suspicion, such as they were, were sufficient for Philip; so he had him immediately arrested, and conducted to Rocca Contrada, where he was not long afterwards beheaded. Indeed, Philip seemed now grown so mistrustful, that, like the last English sovereign of the house of York, he was constantly playing the eavesdropper under the tents of his generals, to know if any man meant to shrink from him. Not long afterwards he had another of his captains, Bartolomeo Collio, whom he began to suspect of carrying on intrigues with the Venetians, seized and cast into prison at Monza.

The Venetians were not slow to avail themselves of the weakness caused by actual desertion and by suspicion in the camp of their enemy. Their general, Michael Attendolo, after having received considerable reinforcements, attacked Francesco Piccinino in a strong position that he had taken near Casale, in an island in the Po, and routed or made prisoners the greater part of his army. The number of horsemen taken on this occasion is estimated by Muratori at four thousand. This disaster in some measure brought Philip to his senses, and on the 5th of October he expressed a wish to treat with the Venetians. But the latter thought that he desired only to gain time, and having, in the words of Muratori, the wind from their

stern, they sent word to their general to continue his course. Michael first availed himself of his victory to take all the strong places in the Cremonese, after which he passed the river Adda, and carried everything before him up to the walls of Milan.

While these things were going on in Lombardy, the Florentines had sent to Sforza a reinforcement sufficient to allow him to resume the offensive. His first act was to endeavour to bring Louis of Aquileia, the commander of the pope's forces, to battle; but not being able to attack him to advantage, he laid siege to Gradara, a town in the territory of Pesaro, at present in the possession of his faithless son-in-law Sigismund. At the same time he was rejoined by his brother Alexander, who seemed only to have quitted him with the greatest reluctance; and Eugenius and Alphonso, being pressed by Philip for succour, were glad to conclude a truce with him. Shortly afterwards, finding that he had not sufficient power to make himself master of Gradara, he retired to winter quarters at Pesaro, there to consider how he might best avail himself of the respite that was now given to him for the retrieving of his affairs.

To all appearance the situation of Filippo Maria was desperate. The Venetians were cantoned for the winter in all the strong places of the territory of Milan, and were awaiting only the return of the season to make themselves masters of the city. They had been so often deceived by him that they had made up their minds not to treat with him except in his capital. The

withdrawal of Alphonso's forces from the March of Ancona would leave the Florentines and Sforza at liberty to invade him. The latter could not be supposed to be friendly disposed towards him; he was bound by treaty to the Florentines and Venetians; there was no captain in Italy capable of opposing him; even of those that remained, the best had gone over to his adversaries. His only chance was now in the acts of diplomacy, whereby he might hope to gain new friends, or to cajole some of his enemies. With this view he endeavoured to impress all the neighbouring states with a sense of the danger they might incur from the overgrown power of the Venetians. He sought to gain the assistance of the king of France, by promising the cession of the frontier towns; and, in order to avert the danger that now threatened his capital, he persuaded Alphonso to send all his disposable forces to Lombardy. But he reposed his chief hope of salvation in his oft-betrayed son-in-law. He tried him once more by working both on his natural feelings and his ambition; he entreated him not to desert his father-in-law when weighed down with years, deprived of sight, and pressed by the adverse fortune of war; and reminded him how much better it would be for him to devote his energies to the preservation of the inheritance of Lombardy for himself and his descendants, than to waste them in the defence of a province of second-rate importance.

To these overtures Sforza replied coldly, that, deeply as he regretted Philip's misfortunes, he could not violate the treaty he had made with the Florentines

and Venetians. But though he thus turned a deaf ear to the entreaties, he was by no means without solicitude as to the ultimate fate, of his father-in-law. Much as he was rejoiced at the result of the battle of Casale, as having first opened a door of salvation to himself, and inflicted a well-merited chastisement on the duke, he did not view without anxiety the events which seemed likely to blot out from the map of Italy the duchy of Milan. On the other hand, he valued the friendship of Cosmo de' Medici beyond that of any man in Italy; and he well knew that it would be folly in him, in his present state of weakness, to break the terms of his treaty with the powerful republic of Venice. But Cosmo soon began to see what line of conduct would be most beneficial to the real interests of his friend; and neither he nor his countrymen wished all the northern provinces of Italy, from the Adriatic to the Ligurian Alps, to fall into the hands of the Venetians. After he had been applied to several times for the long-promised supplies, he suggested to Sforza the satisfying his soldiers with the plunder of Pesaro, recommending to him, at the same time, not to depend too much on the alliance of free states, to whom the profession of arms was an abomination.* With the first piece of advice

* See MACHIAVELLI, *Arte della Guerra — proemio.* "Heanno molti tenuto, e tengono questa opinione che non sia cosa alcuna che minorè convenienza abbia con un altra ne che sia tanto dissimile quanto la vita civile dalla militare. Perche non crede poter vestire un habito civile colui, che vuol, essere espedito e pronto ad ogni violenza, ne i civili costumi ed usanze puote avere quello il quale giudica e quelli costumi essere effeminati, e quella usanza non faverevoli alle sue operationi, ne pare conveniente mantenere la presenza e le parole ordinarie a quello che con la barba e con le bestemie vuole far paura agli altri huomini."—(It is the opinion of many that

Francesco refused to comply; the significance, however, of the last hint was not lost upon him, but he resolved to bide his time.

An event took place early in the following year, which seemed likely to portend still further changes in the fortunes of Sforza. Pope Eugenius IV. expired on the 14th February 1447. He has received no small praise from Muratori and other historians for his having united several sects of Christians to the Roman Catholic Church, and for his having been utterly untainted with the vice of nepotism, which disgraced so many of his order. His great aim through life was to maintain the supremacy of the pontifical authority over that of general councils, and to preserve the integrity of the Dominions of the Church against the rapacity of ambitious sovereigns and aspiring adventurers. Those who are inclined to censure him for being little scrupulous as to the means by which he sought his end, should recollect that he lived in an age when whatever was expedient was thought to be right, and in which the clergy might deceive themselves as to the degree of sanctity attached to their temporal possessions, and think, as Machiavelli* ironically expresses it, that the States of the Church were really ruled by superior orders,

there are no two things more unsuited and dissimilar than the life of a citizen and a soldier. It is thought that an ordinary citizen's costume should not be worn by one who wishes to be equipped and ready for every species of violence, nor can he adopt civilised habits and practices, who thinks such habits effeminate, and such practices unfavourable to the work he has to do. Nor does it seem proper to continue intercourse with one who wishes to inspire terror by his beard and blustering.)

* Machiavelli, *Principe*, cap. 11.

and saved and maintained by the Almighty. M. Sismondi relates an anecdote of him, which shows how his characteristic trait of self-confidence developed itself in the hour of death. When the archbishop of Florence approached to administer to him the extreme unction, he repulsed him briskly, saying, "that he still retained his strength, and that he would send for him when he found himself going." When this circumstance was related to the king of Naples, he observed, "No wonder that the man who dared to fight against death, and was even then scarcely vanquished, should be willing to engage in hostilities against the Colonna, against Sforza, against me, and in short against all Italy." Thomas of Sarzana, bishop of Bologna, was chosen to succeed him under the title of Nicholas V. Though he was not endued with the restless activity of his predecessor, he was remarkable for his learning and piety—qualifications so much more fitted for a Christian bishop.

In the mean time Philip had been backing his entreaties to Sforza with the promises of the most splendid rewards. Among other things, he stipulated to put him in the immediate possession of Brescia, and the remaining cities that had fallen into the hands of the Venetians, should he succeed in retaking them. The latter were not blind to the signs of the times. They had observed, with no small suspicion, the frequent communications that were going on between their enemy and the first captain of the age; they well knew that Sforza's co-operation would, if possible, render more secure, while nothing but his opposition could prevent,

their capture of Milan. They therefore sent to remind him of the terms of his treaty with them, and tried to induce him to render them active assistance by equally glittering offers. They even promised, should they succeed in their designs, to put him in immediate possession of Milan. To all these solicitations, however, he made but a cold reply: he upbraided them with the indifferent performance of their former obligations while he was in distress; adding, that he would, nevertheless, do for them all that he was bound by treaty to do, but no more. Shortly after this, by making a treacherous, though an unsuccessful, attempt on the city Cremona, they afforded to him the long-wished pretence of openly taking his part. When news of this was brought to him, he threw aside all disguise, and promised to assist his father-in-law on the following conditions. The first was, that he should give him pay sufficient to maintain the whole of his army, which he estimated at two hundred and forty thousand florins of gold. The second was, that, on his arrival in his duchy, he should be also allowed to rule all his territories in his name, under the title of commander of the forces. Both these conditions were complied with, and the first was immediately fulfilled. Sforza received a considerable part of the one year's stipend direct from Milan, and the remainder from the hands of Alphonso. He therefore prepared to enter Lombardy, to act in concert with Alphonso and Philip. Such a strange change in the politics of Italy had been brought about in the course of one year: the most solemn treaties had been broken; the most

inflexible minds had been moved; those that were then friends had become enemies; and the nearest friends that had fallen out were again loving one another.*

Matters, however, did not continue in this state very long. There were still at Milan many old friends of Piccinino, and many who, for various reasons, were enemies to Sforza. They all endeavoured to render the duke more than ever suspicious of his son-in-law: they represented to him that, so far from remaining in his post as commander of the forces, he would not be satisfied with anything short of being absolute ruler of the duchy; and they produced letters to show that he had already made allotment of different fiefs in his dominions. So well did they work on the fears of the now tottering duke, that he sent word to the only man by whose assistance his capital could be saved not to enter his dominions, but to march direct upon Padua or Verona. It was in vain that Sforza sent a friend to Milan to show the inadequacy of this plan of operations, and to counteract the calumnies which he knew were being circulated against him: the duke was

* "ἅπανθ' ὁ μακρὸς κἀναρίθμητος χρόνος
φύει τ' ἄδηλα καὶ φανέντα κρύπτεται·
κοὐκ ἔστ' ἄελπτον οὐδὲν, ἀλλ' ἁλίσκεται
χὠ δεινὸς ὅρκος χαὶ περισκέλεῖς φρένες.
. . . . . .
ἔγω δ', ἐπίσταμαι γὰρ ἀρτίως ὅτι
ὅ τ' ἔχθρος ἡμῖν ἐς τοσόνδ' ἐχθαρτέος,
ὡς καὶ φιλήσων αὖθις, ἔς τὲ τὸν φίλον
τοσαῦθ' ὑπ-υργῶν ὠφ.λεῖν βουλήσομαι,
ὡς αἰὲν οὐ μενοῦντα. τοῖς πολλοῖσι γὰρ
βροτῶν ἄπιστός ἔσθ' ἑταιρεας λιμήν."

SOPH., *Ajax.*

immovable, and the condottiere refused to go on what appeared to him a fool's errand.

Thus, by the wavering policy of one man and the intrigues of a party, was sufficient time given to the Venetians to carry on their operations. They were not remiss in availing themselves of their opportunity. Having collected all their forces early in the spring, they passed the Adda at the bridge of Cassia, took up their position at Lambrato, within three miles of their enemy's capital, and more than once marched, with their standards unfurled, to the eastern gate of the city. They had not sufficient supplies to lay siege to it, but they hoped to take it by a *coup-de-main* before Sforza approached with his army; and their leader was given reason to expect that, on his appearance, the Guelf or Republican party would rise and deliver it into his hands. But in this he was disappointed, through the loyalty of the majority of the citizens and the sagacity of the duke. Though the sight of an enemy caused, as usual, much tumult and confusion within the walls, yet men whose fidelity was undoubted were in charge of the gates; those who were known to be most disaffected had been put into custody, and the remainder did not dare to attempt a rising. So, after a sojourn of three days at Lambrato, Michael was obliged to recross the Adda, to make himself master of the strong places in his rear. After having taken all the fortresses on the river, he laid siege to Lecco, a town on the southern extremity of one of the branches of Lake Como. The inhabitants of this town were assisted by their neighbours of Como, with whom they

communicated by the lake, and the place was held with a bravery well worthy of that displayed by the latter in the dawn of Italian liberty — a circumstance which shows that the errors of the present duke had not alienated his subjects from their attachment to his family. Neither the skill nor the discipline of the Venetians could make any impression on it; the inhabitants frequently sallied forth, and made great havoc in their ranks; and the besiegers were more than once obliged to retire to the territory of Cremona to repair their disasters. But the regular troops of Philip had not dared to face an enemy since the battle of Casale; and the duke, finding himself thus plagued for his foolishness, as before, cried out to Sforza in his distress.

Francesco having received supplies from the pope and the king of Naples, both of whom seemed glad to get rid of such a troublesome neighbour on any conditions, again moved northwards. By so doing he evacuated Jesi, the only city that remained to him in his ancient dominions; but he thought that the prospects now opened to him in Lombardy were more inviting than the chance that remained to him of recovering any part of what he had lost. Experience, too, had shown him that, unaided, he was no match for the combined forces of the king of Naples and the pope, and that, whoever might be the ruler of Milan, he alone could preserve it from the Lion of St Mark. And though the retired habits of the duke were such that his subjects in general knew but little of his state, it is not improbable that he at least might have received a hint that there were but little hopes of his recover-

ing from a combined attack of fever and dysentery. It might possibly have been the knowledge of this circumstance that induced him and Bianca to send their children to Cremona to be seen by their grandfather. But natural affection seemed no longer to have a place in Philip's heart; though he was aware of their arrival, he expressed no wish to have them brought into his presence. Shortly afterwards he departed this life, on the 13th of August 1447, at the fortress of Zobbia. Sforza had set out on his expedition with four thousand horse and two thousand foot, and had arrived at his father's native city of Cotignola, when he received intelligence of the event.

The part which the deceased prince played in the drama of Italian politics has been so frequently referred to, that it would be needless to say much with regard to his character. There is no record of his having, like his predecessors, committed any wanton acts of cruelty on his subjects, and the attachment which they displayed to him on several occasions forbids us to think so; but it is probable that he abstained from these more from policy than from principle. Little else remains to be said in his favour. In person he was tall, extremely thin in his youth, but in latter years inclined to corpulency. Like the English king who boasted that he had neither pity, love, nor fear, the aspect of his face corresponded with the perverse bent of his mind,* and the defects of nature were aggravated by his exceeding negligence of his person. He was as fearful of every clap of thunder and flash of lightning as if they

* Sismondi, *Respubliques Italiennes.*

had been ministers of an offended Deity to punish those who were conscious of crimes, and he dreaded visits of furies and ghosts in the dead hour of the night.* Like many who are destitute of every principle of religion, he was extremely particular in all its outward observances; he never passed a day without going through all the forms of devotion, and generally said a prayer whenever he set out on a walk or mounted his horse. In his latter years he so firmly believed in astrology that he collected around him, and on all occasions consulted, the chief professors of the art. To all, even those of his own order and kin, he was difficult of access. Though he hesitated not to have Alphonso of Aragon brought to him when a prisoner, he mortally offended the Emperor Sigismund by refusing to receive him when he visited Italy. So little had he been seen by his subjects, that, when his corpse was brought to Milan, many crowded around it, anxious to behold what manner of man he had been.

* *Petri Candidi Vita Filippi Mariæ Viscontis.*

END OF VOL. I.

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